



JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN
From the portrait by JOHN S. SARGENT

THE CHAMBERLAIN TRADITION

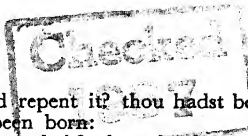
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By

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Wilt thou do the deed and repent it? thou hadst better
never been born:
Wilt thou do the deed and exalt it? then thy fame shall
be outworn:
Thou shalt do the deed and abide it, and sit on thy throne
on high,
And look on to-day and to-morrow as those that never die.

WILLIAM MORRIS



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PREFACE

The object of this book is to show what Great Britain and the British Empire owe to the Chamberlain family, and also to draw attention to those qualities which the father and two sons possessed in common. Limits of space have prevented anything more than a brief biographical sketch of the three men, but in each case this has been written with a view to bringing out their more salient characteristics. When possible, too, they have been allowed to speak for themselves. I have had to content myself with depicting the bare minimum of background necessary to explain the action.

Save in rare instances no use has been made of any except published materials, but for the convenience of those who wish to study the subject further it may be of value if these sources are indicated. For the career of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain I have in the main relied upon Mr. Garvin's great *Life*, supplemented by the two volumes of the statesman's speeches edited by Mr. Boyd. Sir Austen Chamberlain left us all in his debt by the publication during his lifetime of *Peace in Our Time*, *Down the Years*, and *Politics from Inside*, and upon all these I have drawn freely. In both cases the biographies of contemporary statesmen have also been consulted. So far as the career of the present Prime Minister is concerned, I am indebted to his friends, and to newspaper reports of his speeches, for much of the information contained in the following pages.

It is at once a pleasure and a duty to acknowledge the assistance I have received. To Mrs. Carnegie,

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I

THE CHAMBERLAIN FAMILY

I

THE CHAMBERLAIN FAMILY

“Read no history, nothing but biography, for that is life without theory”; such was the advice to the young which Disraeli put into the mouth of one of the principal characters in *Contarini Fleming*. Like much of the counsel that is given to youth this requires to be taken with a good deal of salt, for institutions and ideas are at least as important as men, and to study the latter to the exclusion of the former would be to acquire a distorted view of history.

Fortunately there is very little danger of this where Great Britain is concerned, even if Disraeli’s advice be taken literally. Elsewhere great men have arisen from time to time to mould the State after their own image, or in accordance with their own desires, and those who only studied their careers would be puzzled to account for many an event in the annals of the countries over whose destinies they presided. In this island such has not been the case to anything like the same extent, for our great men have worked through the existing machinery of government, and have very rarely set out to remodel society; indeed, where they have done so their work has hardly ever survived them. Thus the lives of British statesmen have not generally been set against a background of subverted institutions, and in the career of the man it is possible to study the history of the machinery through which he worked.

Perhaps this has happened because family tradition

has always been so strong in British politics. The Cecils, Pitts, Churchills, and Russells are but outstanding examples of a tendency which has been at work down the centuries, for there are innumerable families that have played an important, if not prominent, part in the events of their time. This has not been so marked in the case of other countries, and it may well account for the fact that foreign statesmen are usually in a great deal more of a hurry than our own. When a man's father has held office, and his son is likely to do the same, he is under less temptation to attempt the reformation of society in his own lifetime. There is no particular reason for seeking to destroy an institution with which one's forbears have been closely connected; the impulse is rather to adapt it to changed circumstances. This family tradition has always been strong at Westminster, and it is interesting to see that it is now becoming noticeable in the Socialist Party.

These Parliamentary families, too, have usually stood for some ideal, or have been representative of some particular outlook: the English dislike ideas in the abstract, and the latter have thus tended to be personified in individuals. The Russells and the Greys have always fought for what they considered to be the cause of ordered progress, and however much one may criticize the policy they have from time to time pursued it is impossible not to respect the motives by which they were actuated. To the Pitts we owe the conceptions of a free Empire and of the Balance of the Constitution, and to the younger Pitt in particular, "the pilot that weathered the storm" in Canning's felicitous phrase, the fact that England did not become a French department. The Cecils, both in the days of Elizabeth

and in contemporary times, have been a moderating influence, while lately they have also added an atmosphere of intellectual distinction to any cause to which they have given their support. To these and many other notable families, who have done so much to give our national history its distinctive character, must be added the Chamberlains.

They have always been English through and through, and Mr. Garvin has been unable to trace one drop of foreign blood in them. Originally they came, like the St. Johns and the Cannings, from Wiltshire, but they had been settled in London for several generations before, while still a youth, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain took up his residence in Birmingham. The family was of middle-class Puritan stock, and its members had married wives like themselves. It was not, nor had it any reason to be, ashamed of its origin: "I boast a descent," he once declared from the platform, "of which I am as proud as any baron may be of the title which he owes to the smiles of a King or to the favour of a King's mistress." One of his ancestors was burnt to death under Mary, and from generation to generation there had been a devotion to civil and religious liberty among the Chamberlains, though it was always combined with a sturdy patriotism. For very many years they were typical of thousands of other families up and down the kingdom, and in this ancestral proximity to one of the main streams of English thought was to lie much of the innate strength of the great Colonial Secretary and his two sons.

Soon after Joseph Chamberlain's death, his son, then Mr. Austen Chamberlain, wrote of his father: "No matter what the difficulties, no matter what his

discouragements, once he had seen his way and chosen it, once he had laid his hand to the plough, he never turned back, and he never regretted the sacrifices that his view of duty might entail upon him. He never lost faith. His courage never drooped, and in the darkest days he could find words of inspiration and encouragement for others. . . . He was ever for moving forward, with reverence for the past and care to guard its great traditions, but ever seeking in the future something better, something greater, something nobler than the present." All this, which was profoundly true of Joseph Chamberlain, is equally applicable to his sons, Austen and Neville.

If one were asked to define those qualities which have most distinguished the three Chamberlains in public life, the reply must surely be courage and a willingness to face facts, however unpleasant. Their intimate friends and closest associates have by no means always agreed with the line they have taken on this question or on that, but no one, not blinded by partisan prejudice, has ever questioned the motives by which they were actuated. It required no ordinary courage in the father to leave Mr. Gladstone over the question of Home Rule; in the elder son to break with his party in 1922 on the issue of leaving the Coalition; and in the younger son to say that Sanctions must be dropped when by taking such an attitude he was imperilling his chance of succeeding Mr. Baldwin as Prime Minister.

Yet, although they have had so much in common, the three Chamberlains have given expression to their convictions in different ways, dictated not only by contrasted upbringing but also by the circumstances of the age. Unity in diversity has been the explanation

of their character. When Joseph Chamberlain died, the then Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, admirably summed up his character in the fine tribute which he paid to his memory in the House of Commons:

Mr. Chamberlain was the pioneer of a new generation. He brought with him from the world of business and of municipal life a freshness of outlook, a directness of purpose, and a certain impatience of conventional and circuitous methods. He may be said with truth to have introduced and perfected a new style of speaking equally removed from that of either of the great masters of speech who then had the ear of the House and the nation, Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright. If he kept, as a rule, closer to the ground, he rarely digressed, and he never lost his way. He had, indeed, at his disposal all the resources, natural and acquired, of an accomplished artist, not excluding raillery, sarcasm and invective. But more perhaps—so at least it seems to me—than any orator of our time he gave the impression of complete and serene command, both of his material and of himself, and as has been the case with not a few great men, his speech, and the fashion and mode of his speech, was with him the expression and revelation of character. In that striking personality, vivid, masterful, resolute, tenacious, there were no blurred or nebulous outlines, there were no relaxed fibres, there were no moods of doubt and hesitation, and there were no pauses of lethargy or fear.

Commenting on this Sir Austen very appositely observes that to his father “as to Chatham, speech was a form of action”.

Joseph Chamberlain loved his country passionately, but his patriotism was far removed from the type which

Dr. Johnson described as "the last refuge of a scoundrel": he wished to make his country such a model state that others would wish to imitate it. He set before himself as a goal what Pericles claimed for Athens: "Our Constitution does not copy the laws of neighbouring states; we are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves." He had a deep sympathy with suffering, and he hated wrong and injustice in any form. Nor did he ever hesitate to call attention to abuses which came to his notice, and to denounce them in the most trenchant manner. At the same time he was not prepared to turn the other cheek to a reproving foreigner. For example, when the German Chancellor denounced as the insult of a "distorted judgment" his statement that the methods of the British troops in South Africa were not in fact so drastic as those of the Germans in 1870, Mr. Chamberlain retorted:

What I have said, I have said. I withdraw nothing. I qualify nothing. I defend nothing. As I read history no British minister has ever served his country faithfully and at the same time enjoyed popularity abroad. I make allowance, therefore, for foreign criticism. I will not follow an example that has been set to me. I do not want to give lessons to a foreign minister, and I will not accept any at his hands. I am responsible only to my sovereign and to my countrymen.

At first sight it may appear that there was much that was inconsistent about his career, and he was the last man to claim that he had never changed his mind. In his Rectorial Address at Glasgow in 1897, he said, with reference to the changes which had taken place since he entered public life: "When so much has

altered — persons, opinions and circumstances — I should think it a poor boast to pretend that I alone had remained unchanged; but in view of the confidence that you have now vouchsafed me, I ask you to believe that, through all the vicissitudes of things, I have consistently sought—it may be sometimes with faltering steps and by mistaken roads—the greatness of the Empire and the true welfare of the people at large.”

Mr. Chamberlain was always prepared to admit that he had been wrong. During his South African journey in 1902–3 he was talking to a famous colonial scientist, who said to him, in respect of the Majuba policy of the Gladstone administration of which he had formed part twenty years before: “In those days I’m afraid I didn’t like your African views.” “No,” said the Colonial Secretary, “and the worst of it is that you were in the right.” Yet it is impossible to follow his career, marked as it was by an ever-widening outlook on men and things, without coming to the conclusion that there was an underlying consistency of spirit and of purpose which gave unity to the whole.

We have the authority of Sir Austen for the statement that his father “taught the obligations of duty to his children”, and it was a lesson which they early and readily assimilated. His elder son, like the younger Pitt, was brought up from his earliest days to be a statesman, but although he held high office while still a young man, there were many difficulties in his path. In the first place, he was not a Conservative, but a Liberal Unionist, and although by the turn of the century this was a distinction without a difference, the importance of names in politics cannot be over-estimated; so long as a man has the appropriate

was put before him in which the sentence occurred: "In the case of a war of aggression, such as the South African War". Sir Austen underlined the words, and noted in the margin of the document: "Possibly; but you should not say so to my father's son." He possessed a very high sense of duty, and accepted to the full the constitutional doctrine of the collective responsibility of the members of a government for policy. Where the work of his own department, whatever it might be, was concerned, he admitted of no excuses for himself, and when the Mesopotamia Commission reported adversely on the lack of provision of hospital accommodation he resigned, for although he was not personally responsible the campaign was being conducted under the auspices of the India Office of which he was the chief.

Sir Austen had also an intense dislike of what he considered to be bombast or ostentation, and this sometimes led him to take an unjust view of dead statesmen whom he believed to have been guilty of these crimes. A case in point was George Canning. Sir Austen was my guest at dinner one evening, and we were discussing the great Foreign Secretary whose biography I had recently written. Sir Austen expressed himself in strong terms regarding Canning's love of the limelight, as it appeared to him. The next day I sent him a copy of the book in question, and received the following acknowledgment:

It is very kind of you to send me your Canning, which I have indeed marked down for holiday reading. He always interests me. I am quite unable to deny his greatness or the mark he left on the world, but I must admit that he is to me a kind of Dr. Fell. I will hope, however, that you will make me see him in a pleasanter light.

In one of those books of questions of your loves and hates, likes and dislikes, which were at one time fashionable in country houses, I once came across the question "name three books of undoubted merit which you have been unable to read", and I confessed to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Plutarch's *Lives* and *Paradise Lost*. I fear that, if I were asked to name three great statesmen of undoubted merit whom I nevertheless did not admire, Canning's name would be on my list.

On the other hand he had a great respect for Castlereagh, who appeared to him to be endowed with the qualities in which he considered Canning to be deficient, and he insisted that a portrait of the former should be hung on the wall of the room in the Foreign Office where the Pact of Locarno was to be signed. This dislike of ostentation is fully shared by Mr. Neville Chamberlain, who is among the most retiring of British Prime Ministers.

All three Chamberlains have been distinguished by one characteristic for which they have rarely received the credit they deserved, namely an encouragement of youth and a delight in its society. Joseph Chamberlain collected round him in the days of the Tariff Reform crusade a band of young men, upon some of whom, such as Lord Winterton and Mr. Amery, the passage of the years has left but little trace. He it was, too, who singled out F. E. Smith at a political meeting in Liverpool, and asked the late Sir Charles Petrie to find the young man something better at the coming General Election than the Scotland division for which he was then prospective candidate. Self-important back-benchers may have thought that Sir Austen treated them too superciliously in the lobbies and smoke-room

of the House, though in taking offence in this way they forgot the badness of his sight in later years, but the young men at Oxford and Cambridge found him a most delightful companion. On such occasions there was nothing in the least formal about him, and he was always the centre of a group of eager, almost importunate, questioners, whose curiosity he was only too delighted to satisfy. It was, too, in order that the younger men might have a chance of promotion that he refused to accept office in the second National Government. His brother, the present Prime Minister, has never had either the time or the inclination to become what is known as "a social figure", but his interest in youth is just as great; he has done much for the younger generation, and has not merely contented himself with telling them that they have the world at their feet. Only a few months ago, when he was recovering from a severe attack of gout, he came to a dinner of young Oxford men, and stayed until after eleven answering their criticisms of his policy, as if he had been their contemporary. It was he who, as Minister of Health, first advanced the pleas and plans of the enthusiasts for physical fitness to the status of an officially approved policy, and his appeal at the annual conference of the Conservative Party at Margate in 1936 for better physical education was wholly in the Chamberlain tradition. It would decidedly have met with the cordial approbation of his father.

It is often urged against Sir Austen that in his later days he forsook the Imperialist traditions of his family in favour of a closer connection between Great Britain and the mainland of Europe, but to adopt this standpoint is to look at the year 1924 from the angle of to-day. It is arguable that he was wrong in basing British

policy so exclusively on the bayonets of France, but he did succeed, if only temporarily, in bringing the four Great Powers of Western and Central Europe together in the Locarno Pact. If he was mistaken, then all his colleagues in the Cabinet were equally to blame, and neither he nor they could have been expected to realize that within a few years the economic blizzard would be blowing across the world. Furthermore, in considering the action of any statesman in a democratic country, there is the attitude of public opinion to be taken into account, and the only alternative to Sir Austen's policy of pacts and agreements was rearmament on an extensive scale, which the electorate in those days would not have tolerated. All this is not to say that Sir Austen was right, for the future alone can give the final answer to that question, but if he were mistaken it was in company with the overwhelming majority of his fellow countrymen. Nor can there be any doubt that he was influenced by the highest motives, namely a desire to give Great Britain and the Empire that interval of peace which was so greatly needed.

Mr. Neville Chamberlain's career has more nearly resembled his father's than that of his brother, for he was not bred to politics, but to business and municipal affairs. At the same time a great deal of nonsense has been written and talked, even by his supporters and admirers, about his lack of acquaintance with national politics before he entered the House of Commons in 1918. A man does not come from a household where both his father and his elder brother for years held the highest offices of State without himself acquiring, however unconsciously, the knowledge and outlook of a statesman, and a realization of the difficulties with

which the latter has to deal. He is the last man to claim that he played any part behind the scenes in those early days, but others came to respect his opinions and judgment when he was unknown outside Birmingham. In the papers, published or otherwise, of men like the late Professor Hewins, there are constant references to him, and he was frequently present at the discussions between his father and brother and the various leading Conservatives and Unionists. In short, the present Prime Minister's political training has been as complete as that of the other Chamberlains, but it has been of a somewhat different nature.

In the first place, great Imperialists as all of the family have been, it was reserved for him alone actually to live in the Empire overseas. For seven years, at the most impressionable period of his career, he was in the West Indies, and he thus knows by instinct what others can only acquire laboriously from newspapers and books, or from an occasional flying visit or personal interview, namely how the Briton in the Dominions and colonies looks on the problems of the Empire. He has lived among people to whom the Rhine, the Danube, and the Mediterranean are but geographical terms, and to whom the policy of the President of the United States is more important than that of a German or Italian dictator. It may be said that the Bahamas Islands are a very insignificant part of the possessions of the British Crown, but the standpoint, where Europe is concerned, of all Britons beyond the seas is much the same, and Mr. Neville Chamberlain is fully acquainted with it. When he became Prime Minister he soon impressed the country with the freshness and detachment of his views where foreign affairs were concerned, and although this can be attributed in no small

measure to the influence of his father, some of it is undoubtedly due to his experiences amid the coral reefs of the Bahamas. The Empire is in his blood, both by heredity and environment.

Then, like his father, he had a thorough training in local government in Birmingham. The Empire for him is not England alone, nor is England (as too many people imagine it to be) bounded on the East by the Tower, on the South by the Thames, on the West by Earl's Court Road, and on the North by Regent's Park. It is said that an English clergyman was once lecturing on the Continent, and he prefaced his remarks by saying: "When I refer to religion, I mean Christianity; when I refer to Christianity, I mean Protestantism; and when I refer to Protestantism, I mean the Church of England as by law established." When Englishmen talk of the Empire, they too often mean England; when they talk of England, they too often mean London; and when they talk of London, they mean the City and the West End. A more fatal mistake for a politician to make it would be difficult to imagine. The two great movements of the last hundred years, Free Trade and Protection, came from Manchester and Birmingham respectively, and the opinion of London is no guide to that of the country as a whole. The gossip of the clubs and the wild statements of the hoardings find no echo in the sober mass of the English people in the factory or on the farm.

Joseph Chamberlain never fell into the error of taking the capital at its own valuation, nor is his younger son likely to do so. The latter's patriotism was born in Birmingham and developed across the sea. As Kipling so well put it:

God gives all men all earth to love,
But since man's heart is small,
Ordains for each one spot shall prove
Beloved over all.

For the Prime Minister that one spot has been Birmingham, and no one who has not been bred in the fierce municipal life of a great provincial city can have any conception of the local pride which this engenders. Many Londoners would be hard put to it to give the name of the borough in which they live, and fewer still know that of their ward. In the provinces the elections each year are keenly contested, but although the parties fight bitterly they are at one in their determination to uphold the fair fame of their city. Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham mean a great deal more to their inhabitants than does the capital to most Londoners. Their politics are also a microcosm of those at Westminster, and if the issues are not as great they provoke no less differences of opinion. It was in this school that Mr. Neville Chamberlain, like his father before him, served his political apprenticeship, and learnt how to handle men.

Although he was, compared with the other members of his family, generally unknown to the public, his experience of government and the great questions of the day was peculiarly extensive. As Director-General of National Service in 1916-17 he saw something of Mr. Lloyd George's administrative methods, and as Postmaster-General under Mr. Bonar Law he became acquainted with the working of a business department. All this was an admirable prelude to the Ministry of Health and the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, in which two posts he first attracted the attention of the man-in-the-street. In this connection one cannot but

be struck by the parallels with his father and brother. Just as the former accepted what was then the Cinderella of Government departments, the Colonial Office, and made it of the first importance, so did his younger son, with the family vision, grasp the potentialities of the Ministry of Health. When Mr. Baldwin formed his second administration Mr. Neville Chamberlain waived his right to the Chancellorship of the Exchequer in favour of Mr. Winston Churchill. Like Sir Austen on more than one occasion, he was not going to press his claims when he felt that the good of the country demanded that another should take his place.

His work at the Exchequer since 1931 is still fresh in the public mind, but it is doubtful whether the magnitude of the task that faced him is sufficiently appreciated. He certainly required all the Chamberlain courage to undertake it. Never since the younger Pitt was called upon to put the national finances in order after the disasters of the War of American Independence had a Chancellor shouldered such a burden. The combination of an economic crisis and a Socialist government had brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy, and it was left for Mr. Chamberlain to restore the situation during a period when the international horizon was growing every day more overcast. The state of British credit when he left the Treasury to become Prime Minister, and the ease with which the vast bill for rearmament is being met, are the measure of his success. It has been objected by critics that his methods have been too orthodox. If this is the case it has not been for lack of quack remedies from which to choose, but with a world rocking on its foundations caution becomes not only

a virtue but a necessity. Inside the Treasury, it may be added, Mr. Chamberlain was always master, and some of the older officials have been heard to declare that there had not been such a Chancellor since the days of "Black Michael".

When, after the Coronation, Mr. Chamberlain was appointed Prime Minister he could feel that he had attained that office on his own merits and without intrigue. No man had a more loyal colleague than Mr. Baldwin possessed in his Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is no use disguising the fact that in the early months of 1937 there were not a few people who were seriously perturbed at the prospect of a King and a Prime Minister, both new to their job, and by no means as well known as their respective predecessors to the nation and the Empire. These fears have been falsified. The reception everywhere accorded to Their Majesties may at first have been an expression of sympathy with them for being compelled to ascend the throne in peculiarly difficult circumstances, but it now betokens respect and devotion inspired by the way in which they are carrying out their duties. As for Mr. Chamberlain, the results of the by-elections were a vote of confidence such as no Prime Minister has ever before received.

Such has been the Chamberlain tradition—courage and optimism, foresight and vigour. Conditions have changed since Joseph Chamberlain took his seat in the House of Commons over sixty years ago, but there has been a Chamberlain there ever since without a break, displaying the family characteristics in good fortune and in ill. The Cannings alone in the national history can claim to rival the attainments of the three Chamberlains in so brief a period.

II

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY YEARS

"From the Gallery," wrote a journalist of a famous scene in the House of Commons in 1876, "I saw the two great Imperial statesmen meet. Chamberlain had said that Disraeli never opened his mouth without telling a falsehood. He stood, carefully groomed, eye-glass in eye, recommending the Gothenburg system. Disraeli was fetched, sat down, and put up *his* glass, which he seemed to hold encircled with his forefinger, so that he might be quizzing; and so the two surveyed each other, doubtless exchanging telepathic defiance." The eye-witness was wrong in the subject before the House, but in all else his description is supported by other evidence. The aged Prime Minister certainly resented the other's attack, which he described as what "you might expect from the cad of an omnibus". Perhaps the passage of the years had made him forget another maiden speech, delivered thirty-nine years before, when a young member referred to "the noble lord from his pedestal of power wielding in one hand the keys of St. Peter and warring with the other", and not being allowed to finish the sentence. Had the bitterness with which he had assailed Peel also escaped the memory of the Conservative leader? There was already more in common between the Prime Minister and the new member for Birmingham than was suspected by any present that day at Westminster, and there was to be a great deal more before

both had run their course. For the moment it was the case of an elderly Satan rebuking youthful sin.

Mr. Chamberlain, like Disraeli, was the first of his family to go into politics, but, as has been shown, he had his roots very deep in the soil of England. There seem to be families which for generations produce worthy citizens, though in no way out of the ordinary, and then suddenly, for no apparent reason, throw up a genius; so it was with the Chamberlains, but in their case the phenomenon is the more remarkable in that the genius in question was able to transmit a very considerable amount of his brilliance to his sons. For several generations after they left their native Wiltshire they had been hard-working and prosperous, if not very wealthy, shoe-makers in the City, living over their premises in Milk Street, and six of them had served as Masters of the Cordwainers' Company. Then, in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, came a general improvement in means of communication, and the family forsook Milk Street for the pleasant suburb of Camberwell. There, at what was then 3, Camberwell Grove, and is now 118 The Grove, was born on 8th July, 1836 Joseph Chamberlain, eldest child of another Joseph Chamberlain and his wife, *née* Caroline Harben.

Typical of thousands of families of that day as was the background against which his youth and childhood were set, he differed from many of his contemporaries in that for generations the Chamberlains had been Unitarians, and this gave him for years an outlook on life which must be taken into account if his character is to be fully understood. When Presbyterianism began to decline after the Restoration many of its congregations became Unitarians, but though

they changed their doctrine, they often retained the old Calvinist attitude. Whatever may be said for or against Presbyterianism it is a fighting creed, and, in spite of Predestination, it generally has the effect of making its followers extremely self-reliant. A very large proportion of the world's leaders during the last four centuries have been brought up on the Shorter Catechism. Mr. Chamberlain inherited to no small extent the feeling that he was one of the elect, and it was both his strength and his weakness. It nerved him to fresh efforts when things seemed to be going wrong, and it helped him to withstand the terrible domestic blows which fate was to deal him: on the other hand it was sometimes inclined to render him blind to the case of his opponents. Had his religious upbringing been different he must have been other than he was, though it is impossible to believe that this would not have had a deleterious effect upon his development.

His first schoolmistress, a Miss Pace, has left on record an account of the boy and his family. "Mrs. Chamberlain used to come and see me about her son. She was most anxious he should do well and perform his duties faithfully. They were a serious family, and she did not wish Joseph to learn or read anything light and frivolous. I remember her very well after all these years. She had a fine face, quiet and still. I do not remember that I ever saw his father. They were rich City people, and they kept much in their own set; people found their friends in those days in the circle of their church or chapel, and the Chamberlains were Unitarians. Joseph Chamberlain took his Bible lesson with the rest, but he did not learn the Church Catechism. He was a clever child, who didn't take things easily, but went deeply into them, and was very

serious for a boy. I remember his mother once said to me, 'Joseph asks questions I have great difficulty in answering.' His father was a man of serious disposition, but he was remarkably shrewd in business, and in private life he was extremely high-principled."

Joseph Chamberlain's boyhood was in no way exceptional, and although he appears to have been above the average in intelligence there was none of the precocity of the young Macaulay, of whom his nephew tells us that "from the time that he was three years old he read incessantly, for the most part lying on the rug before the fire, with his book on the ground, and a piece of bread and butter in his hand". There was nothing of this premature bookishness about Joseph Chamberlain. One of the few stories which survive from this period of his career is of a very different nature, and concerns nothing less than the foundation of a Peace Society. The boys received no encouragement from Miss Pace "because she felt sure it would stir up quarrels among them, and of course they were forbidden to fight". Mr. Chamberlain's own account of his first essay in political organization is worth quoting: "I founded that Peace Society. It was to be a Charitable Society also, and we had a fund of fivepence half-penny to distribute, of which I contributed the largest share; for I remember my uncle had given me a fourpenny bit. The quarrel was over what was to be done with so large a sum. Eventually it went to a crossing sweeper near the school, and that was the end of the Peace Society."

In 1845 the Chamberlains moved to Highbury, and the great statesman always retained so pleasant a recollection of his life there that in later years he named his house in Birmingham after the place. It is customary

now to regard children of the early Victorian period as unfortunate creatures to whom the joys of life were a sealed book, but there was no evidence of this in the Chamberlain home. Young Joseph and his brothers and sisters went to dances and parties, organized amateur theatricals, and spent their holidays at Margate and Eastbourne, for all the world as if they had been subjects of King George VI rather than of his great-grandmother. In 1851, too, the Great Exhibition was opened, and many were the journeys from Highbury to South Kensington to see the wonders there displayed. A year earlier Joseph had been sent to University College School, where he carried everything before him, being particularly brilliant in mathematics and French. There his educational career finished, for Oxford and Cambridge were still forbidden ground to a Dissenter. Many years later he told Professor Hewins that he regretted not having been able to go to one of the older universities; it was his opinion that the great advantage of going to a public school and then to Oxford or Cambridge was that one was brought early into contact with the men with whom one was afterwards associated in public life, and this would always give the older universities a pull over places like Birmingham.

For many years it was fashionable to sneer at Mr. Chamberlain as a "self-made" man, though what there is reprehensible about such an individual, provided he has made himself in a reputable manner, it is difficult to see. In any event, Joseph Chamberlain clearly does not come into this category. At the same time, he has suffered from the criticism of a certain section of Anglican and Roman Catholic opinion which even to-day appears to believe that anyone who has

been brought up in a Nonconformist household must necessarily be intellectually stunted. As the present writer was himself so brought up, perhaps he may be allowed to say that such is emphatically not the case, and it was certainly not so with Mr. Chamberlain. Although his oratory did not reek of the midnight oil he was, like both his sons, extremely well-read, and he took every opportunity that a busy life allowed to keep in touch with the latest developments in thought and research. Nor was he any the worse for going early into business, and coming into touch with men. He learnt the family trade thoroughly, for he began at the bottom in the workshop, not in the office, and he thus acquired that insight into the mind of the British working-man which was afterwards to prove so useful.

At the early age of eighteen he was suddenly put in a position where he had to stand on his own feet. His aunt had married one John Sutton Nettlefold, a maker of screws, who had originally been in business in London, but afterwards transferred his activities to Birmingham. At the Great Exhibition were shown two American patents which completely revolutionized screw-making, and after careful consideration Nettlefold decided to buy them. By himself he had not the necessary capital, and he asked his brother-in-law to go in with him. The other consented, and sent his eldest son to Birmingham to look after his money. So began perhaps the most eventful connection between a man and a city that is recorded in English history. Mr. Chamberlain's business career in his new surroundings was amazingly successful: the details do not concern us here, and it will suffice to say that by the time he was thirty-eight he had made enough on which to retire; he was not, as is sometimes alleged,

fabulously rich, and Mr. Garvin is unwilling to put his personal share of the sum paid for the Chamberlain interest at more than £120,000. It was not vast wealth, but it was a comfortable amount for a rising politician to have behind him in the seventies of last century.

This business experience was invaluable, more particularly in an age when it was rare for statesmen to have any practical knowledge of industry and commerce. Often, too, Mr. Chamberlain had to visit the Continent, and that still further widened his acquaintance with men and things. He considered the wishes of his customers in a way which at that time, when Britain was the workshop of the world, was deemed quixotic, if not wholly unnecessary. For example, he found that the firm's catalogue for France went out with the screws listed under English weights and measures, so he gave instructions that the decimal system should in future be employed; then when he discovered that in France screws were wrapped in blue paper, he had his packets for export to that country made up in the same way. A matter of sentiment, thought his competitors, and not worth bothering about, "but", as he himself once said, "sentiment is one of the greatest factors in all our affairs . . . the world is not governed entirely by interest, or in my opinion particularly by interest." It was a period when old processes were everywhere giving place to new, and many a long-established firm went down in the fight. The patent which Nettlefold and Chamberlain had acquired gave them an enormous advantage over their rivals, many of whom were gradually forced either to sell or to close their doors. Needless to say this did not endear Mr. Chamberlain to the victims, and more than once during his political career charges of

sharp practice were brought against him, but never, it may be added, substantiated.

In his private life he was destined to know the extremes of both happiness and sorrow during the years which he spent in Birmingham. In 1861 he married Harriet Kenrick, and the marriage was a success from every point of view; unhappily, within little more than two years Mrs. Chamberlain died, leaving her husband with two babies, a daughter and a son, of whom the latter was one day to be Sir Austen Chamberlain. The widower reeled under the blow, and in a letter to a friend he said: "As I write all this, and think that I am never to know and feel her love or delight in her ways here again, I declare it seems almost impossible to live." Still, he was only twenty-seven, and in due course time softened the blow. In 1868 he was married again—to the cousin of his first wife: once more, the cup of happiness was dashed from his lips ere he had done more than taste it, for seven years later the second Mrs. Chamberlain died, after having been the mother of the present Prime Minister and three daughters. Mr. Chamberlain's dejection at this fresh loss alarmed his friends, and to him the future seemed to offer no hope. "There is not a fibre in my whole being which has not been roughly torn asunder. You can judge how desolate and solitary I feel, and how dark and difficult my future life seems to me." These tragedies had their effect upon his character, and steeled him to an endurance which was to amaze his contemporaries. He had had early experience of the greatest sorrow a man can sustain, and after this the wounds he received in the political arena seemed of relatively small account.

It is now time to turn to Joseph Chamberlain's

public life, which began at a later age than is usual; indeed, he was in his fortieth year before he succeeded in entering the House of Commons. His elder son was to be there at twenty-nine, but his younger son was nearly fifty before he was first elected. Mr. Chamberlain had been brought up in Radical and Nonconformist surroundings, and it was only natural that he should share the opinions of those with whom he was associated both in business and at home. Nevertheless, he was from the very first an independent type of Radical, and he never had much sympathy with the views of those who are best described as "Little Englanders". When he was hardly out of his teens he crossed swords with John Bright himself on this subject at a dinner-party. His elders had received the statesman's observations with respect, whether or no they agreed with his views, but this was not the Chamberlain way. It was reminiscent of another dinner-party some eighty years before, when the younger Pitt, fresh down from Cambridge, put the mighty Gibbon to flight. The only difference was that whereas the historian took offence, Bright declared he was glad to see the young men still had plenty of spirit.

It was an age to inspire a man with the upbringing of Joseph Chamberlain, for both abroad and at home a new world seemed to be coming into existence. Italy was united at last; Austria was going down before Prussia; the Second Empire was tottering to its fall; while, across the Atlantic, to those who thought like the Chamberlains liberty appeared to have triumphed with the armies of the North. The ultimate result of all this was hidden from that generation, and Mr. Chamberlain himself was never to witness the climax, though both his sons were fated to play no small part

in the struggle to avert the worst effects of the forces set in motion at this time. In domestic politics change was clearly indicated. For some years the reform movement seemed to have spent itself, and the Premiership of Palmerston was a period of torpor: but "Pam" died in 1865, and the reformers soon showed that they had merely been consolidating their position in preparation for a further advance. "Gladstone will soon have it all his own way," said the old Prime Minister, "and whenever he gets my place we shall have strange doings." It proved a true prophecy.

Mr. Chamberlain entered politics by a side-door, and this circumstance was but the first example of a fate to which he became increasingly more subject, namely that with him one sphere of activity was continually leading to another, until he found himself with interests and duties which but a short time before he would have deemed outside his province. He had made it his practice to teach in the Sunday and night schools attached to the Unitarian Church which he attended. His experience convinced him of two things, that although it was right, it was highly dangerous, to widen the basis of political power until the new electorate was educated, and to achieve this, education must be compulsory and free. Years later, when he was first returned to the House of Commons, he told a public meeting: "England is said to be the paradise of the rich: we have to take care that it is not suffered to become the purgatory of the poor." Little enough had been done for education up to then, for even after Queen Victoria came to the throne the nation was still spending a paltry £30,000 a year on education while Prussia spent twenty times that amount.

"If we could have an Education Society on the right

lines," said Jesse Collings, "the very stones in the street would rise and join us." As a result the Birmingham Education Society was founded, and it began its work by paying the fees for numbers of children at the existing schools, but the more its members investigated the problem the more they came to the conclusion that a national effort was required, and that education was the affair of the State. With this aim in view the Birmingham Education Society was merged in the bigger National Education League, of which Mr. Chamberlain was appointed chairman of the executive committee. As *Punch* put it:

. . . to make education a fact—
Spite of clashings of Church and of creed; . . .
Showy face of mean matter, till now
'Twas Birmingham's business to plan,
Her new work's to make substance of show
In our schools; and her metal is—Man!

Within a few months no less than 2,500 prominent educationalists from all parts of the kingdom had been enrolled, as well as forty members of Parliament. From the beginning Mr. Chamberlain based the movement on working-class support. "From eighty to one hundred thousand working-men," he said, "have given their support to the platform of the league. They have a personal interest in this matter . . . if this matter of education is taken up by the working classes, as we hope and believe it will be, and if it is made part of their political programme, then our success is certain."

No field is so arid as that of past educational controversy, but it was the work of Mr. Chamberlain in connection with Mr. Forster's Education Bill of 1870 that first brought him into general notice. The policy

of his league was that education was to be controlled by the local authorities and that it was to be undenominational, and when it was found that the Government measure did not make provision for either of these points, Mr. Chamberlain threw himself into the fray. There were visits to Downing Street, during which he made the acquaintance of Mr. Gladstone, and disturbed the equanimity of Mr. Forster. Yet in the end the Bill remained but an imperfect instalment of Mr. Chamberlain's ideal scheme, for the control of education was placed in the hands, not of the local authorities, but of specially elected School Boards, while the twenty-fifth clause empowered the payment of public money to denominational schools in cases of poverty. Mr. Chamberlain lived, however, to see the Act amended. In 1891, the administration of Lord Salisbury made education free, and twelve years later that of Mr. Balfour abolished the School Boards, thus rendering the local authorities responsible for education.

Before leaving this subject it must be made clear that at no time was Mr. Chamberlain a rabid anti-clerical of the Continental type who wished to abolish religion in the schools, and his attitude became less uncompromising even towards denominational schools in course of years. Before the Education Act of 1903 was passed he stated his views in an address to his constituents: "In my opinion this question cannot be settled without a compromise. . . . If you could draw this marked distinction between secular and all religious education, that would be fair to everybody. But your unsectarian education which to-day is given in the Board schools of Birmingham, is that fair? It is unfair to the Roman Catholic, it is unfair to the Jew,

and it is unfair to that much larger class of people who consider that indefinite religious instruction is in itself irreligious and therefore sectarian." He then went on to point out that the supporters of denominational teaching had not only to pay, through the rates, for the Council schools, where the instruction is either what they do not believe, or leaves out the essentials of their creed, but also for the special teaching they wanted, and he asked was it fair to such people to refuse them the instruction which they requested. "Do you think it is religious equality to insist upon that, and at the same time refuse to those denominations the right of having the religious instruction for their children to which they do attach real importance?"

Soon after the league had been founded Mr. Chamberlain became a member of the Birmingham Council, and when the School Board came into existence he was elected to that: in this way he began his career in municipal politics, and he found enough to do to occupy even his superabundant energies. Birmingham had not changed much since Byng had noted its "insolence", and wrote that it was "a town wherein I should be crippled in a week from a want of flagstones." It was chiefly known to the outside world for the violence of its Radical opinions, and for slums that outraged even the none too tender consciences of the early Victorian era. In spite of the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 its affairs were conducted by a narrow oligarchy which met, by no means inappropriately, at "The Old Woodman" in Easy Row. To clear out the Augean Stables which he saw before him, Mr. Chamberlain realized that he must have a party machine, and so he applied the experience which he had gained during his educational campaign.

Gradually there came into existence the famous Birmingham caucus which was to revolutionize English politics. Admittedly it was open to considerable criticism, and it introduced party politics into local government, but, with the extension of the franchise, it was probably inevitable, and no one then could have foreseen that before another twenty years had passed the Irish would have compelled the introduction of the closure into the House of Commons: together these two innovations rendered the party machines the masters of British politics, and such they have since remained.

It may be that some men in early life map out their careers in detail, but such was not the case with Mr. Chamberlain, for where he was concerned one thing led to another. The machine which he created fulfilled all his expectations, and gave the Liberals a substantial majority on the Council, which, in its turn, chose him for Mayor. The day of "The Old Woodman" in Easy Row was over.

As Mr. Chamberlain saw it three reforms were immediately necessary, the acquisition by the municipality of the gas and water supply, and slum clearance. The great problem was how to find the money without a substantial increase in the rates, for the latter method had not yet become the normal procedure in local government. The new Mayor soon came to the conclusion that the one reform could be made to defray the greater part of the cost of the other. It was here that his business training was so valuable. He saw that if the gas undertaking was properly conducted, that is to say rationalized, it should yield the town far greater profits than could be made by several companies, each with a separate organization. Nevertheless, it required

no inconsiderable courage to advise his fellow-townsmen to embark on reforms which would increase the annual expenditure of Birmingham from half a million to two and a half millions. At a ratepayers' meeting to consider the question the suggestion was made that the price of gas should be raised, and this gave him his chance. "To make a profit that way would be a mere juggle . . . a proceeding with which I should be thoroughly ashamed to be connected. . . . I will repeat the offer I made to the Corporation, that if they will take this offer and farm it out to me, I will pay them £20,000 a year for it, and at the end of fourteen years I shall have a snug little fortune of £200,000. Councillor Stone asks us to throw away future large profits for the sake of present small gains. I cannot accept that as my line of policy; it is not the way in which I have been in the habit of conducting my own private business." To the great advantage of the town, Mr. Chamberlain got his way, and within five years, he was fully justified in the line he had taken. By then £80,000 had been paid in relief of rates; £50,000 had been placed to the reserve, and £35,000 to the sinking fund; and the gas was both cheaper and better.

After the gas came the water, and this meant an even sterner fight, for the companies concerned thought their position was unassailable, and they stood out for compensation on an excessive scale. Mr. Chamberlain fought them point by point in the committee-rooms of the House of Commons. He contended that the profits earned by the water companies were largely due to the growth of the town, and that in justice these belonged to the ratepayers, not to private speculators. "All monopolies," he declared, "which are in any way sustained by the State ought to be in the hands of the

representatives of the people, by the representative authorities should they be administered, and to them should the profits go." Once more he was successful, and the water supply of Birmingham passed under the control of the municipality.

Slum clearance is, as the present generation knows full well, no easy matter to accomplish, and it was even more difficult in the seventies of last century when the public conscience was a great deal more complacent than it is to-day. Mr. Chamberlain was one of the first to realize that it was no use improving the educational system if housing conditions were to be allowed to continue in their existing state. "How," he asked, "can we educate the children of the town when, after keeping them in school for a few hours, we send them for the rest of the night to homes where the education they receive is of the worst possible kind, where anything like decency, and honesty and morality, is almost impossible?" He had no sympathy with the argument that the degradation of the masses was their own fault. "Their fault! Yes, it is legally their fault; and when they steal we send them to gaol, and when they commit murder we hang them. But if the members of this Council had been placed under similar conditions, if from infancy we had grown up in the same way, does any one of us believe that we should have run no risk of the gaol or the hangman? For my part I have not sufficient faith in my own inherent goodness to believe that anything can make headway against such frightful conditions as those I have described. It is no more the fault of these people that they are vicious and intemperate than it is their fault that they are stunted, deformed, debilitated and diseased." All this sounds platitudinous to-day, and that such is the case is part

of the debt which England owes the Chamberlains; but it was by no means accepted as axiomatic in 1874. For more than two hundred years poverty had been regarded not as a misfortune, but as a crime, and it required no small courage to tell the Victorian era that a return must be made to the more Christian conception of earlier times.

In due course the remedial measures were applied, and forty or fifty acres of property were bought. "By God's help the town shall not know itself," had been the prophecy of its forceful Mayor, and before long it was fulfilled. From a by-word of reproach Birmingham had become a pattern to the rest of the country, for the measures mentioned above were not the only reforms due to the initiative of Mr. Chamberlain. The lack of pavements, to which Byng had taken exception, was remedied; the art gallery was enlarged, and the libraries extended; while baths, parks, and recreation grounds came into existence. Indeed, it is more than likely that had Mr. Chamberlain never concerned himself with national politics his fame as a municipal administrator would have kept his memory fresh.

Given the circumstances of the time it is not surprising that he acquired by his efforts the reputation of a Jacobin. In spite of Disraeli contemporary Conservatives were inclined to see in criticisms of the abuses of the existing order an attack on that order itself, and for them Mr. Chamberlain became an English Robespierre: above his stinging rhetoric they fancied they heard the rattle of the tumbril over the cobbled streets, and the roar of the mob round the guillotine. Mr. Chamberlain never at any time went out of his way to conciliate opponents, and at this stage of his career he seemed positively to delight in enraging

them. In September, 1873, for instance, he wrote an article for the *Fortnightly Review* which would be considered alarming even in this fourth decade of the twentieth century. He called for "Free Church, Free Schools, Free Land, and Free Labour", and vigorously defended the Trades Unions against "wealthy legislators ached up to the eyes and consolled up to the chin". Accordingly, when, in November, 1874, the Prince and Princess of Wales visited Birmingham there was much speculation as to the reception with which they would meet at the hands of the Mayor, who was generally regarded as a republican.

To understand Mr. Chamberlain's attitude towards the monarchy at this time it must be remembered that Queen Victoria was then at the height of her unpopularity on account of her long seclusion following the death of the Prince Consort, and that the recent fall of the Second Empire had given a great fillip to republicanism all over the world. Mr. Chamberlain had himself gone so far as to declare: "I do not feel any great horror at the idea of the possible establishment of a republic in our country. I am quite certain that sooner or later it will come." A few weeks before the arrival of the Royal visitors he defined his position a little more clearly, and far more moderately:

I have never, in private or in public, advocated republicanism for this country. We may be tending in that direction, but I hold that the time has not arrived yet—even if it ever arrive—and I hold also that Radicals and Liberals have quite enough to occupy their best energies without wasting their time in what seems to me a very remote speculation. At the same time, gentlemen, there may be an exaggerated loyalty as well as an exaggerated

republicanism, and I do not think that those are the truest friends of monarchy, who enshrine, or attempt to enshrine, Royal persons in a stifling atmosphere of fulsome admiration. In this, as in everything else, we must say what we mean, and mean what we say, and I think that a better description of loyalty than the sort which grows hysterical at public dinners on occasions of the usual loyal toasts, and gloats in private over the tittle-tattle of the clubs and the unproved and commonly unfounded scandals of what is called high life. We should praise our princes and rulers for what we see worthy of admiration, we may respect them as the type and symbol of constituted authority and settled order and government in our midst, and by testimony like this we shall do them greater honour and give them greater pleasure than by attributing to them immaculate perfection and superhuman virtues.

At no time, it may be added, did Mr. Chamberlain descend to the language of Charles Bradlaugh and John Richard Green.

The visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales passed off without a hitch, and *Punch* published a Tenniel cartoon depicting the Brummagem Lion kneeling before the Princess to have his claws clipped, with the verses:

Like a gentleman he has comported himself in this
glare of the princely sun;
Has just said what he ought to have said and done
what he ought to have done:
Has put his red cap in his pocket, and sat on his
Fortnightly article,
And of red republican claws or teeth displayed
not so much as a particle.

That visit sowed the seeds of a mutual regard between the Prince and Mr. Chamberlain which was to last for the rest of their lives. It arose from no sycophancy on the latter's part, but the more Mr. Chamberlain became acquainted with the place of the throne in the national life, the more convinced he was of its indispensability, and this feeling was strengthened by the charm of the Heir Apparent. With the Queen it was different, and it was many years before she came to think kindly of this uncompromising Radical, who was so disrespectful about the established order in Church and State, and who was so rude to Mr. Disraeli.

The House of Commons was by now beckoning to him, and though he did not actually sever his connection with the Birmingham Council until he became President of the Board of Trade in 1880, he ceased four years before to play the leading part in its deliberations. No man in modern times has done more to raise the standard of municipal life, for he rightly believed that local government could only succeed if the natural leaders of the people participated fully in its obligations. "I have no sympathy at all with superior persons who sneer at municipal work, and at those who are unselfishly endeavouring to perform it; but, unfortunately, these sneers have a tendency to promote a result which they are supposed to deprecate. We have seen in the United States of America how the withdrawal of men of character and of ability from all concern and interest in local work has depreciated the standard of public morality. . . . In our local parliament we want men of the highest ability and culture to keep alive, by their own examples and in their own persons, a love of knowledge and the appreciation of the highest intellectual requirements. On the other



A BRUMMAGEM LION.

Punch, November 14, 1874

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hand, it is absolutely necessary that we should remain in close sympathy and relationship with the mass of the people, whose daily needs and common wants should find fitting and frequent expression in our midst."

Mr. Chamberlain's first attempt to enter the House of Commons was made at the General Election of 1874 when he stood for Sheffield as there was no vacancy for Birmingham. The omens were not propitious for supporters of Mr. Gladstone, who had been in power since 1868, and whose administration had become decidedly unpopular. "For nearly five years," said Mr. Disraeli, "the present Ministers have harassed every trade, worried every profession, and assailed or menaced every class, institution and species of property in the country. Occasionally they have varied this state of civil warfare by perpetuating some job which outraged public opinion, or by stumbling into mistakes which have been always discreditable and sometimes ruinous." It was, too, with reference to this Government that the Leader of the Opposition made a parallel which Lord Morley called "one of the few pieces of classic oratory of the century":

As time advanced it was not difficult to perceive that extravagance was being substituted for energy by the Government. The unnatural stimulus was subsiding. Their paroxysms ended in prostration. Some took refuge in melancholy, and their eminent chief alternated between a menace and a sigh. As I sat opposite the Treasury Bench the Ministers reminded me of one of those marine landscapes not very unusual on the coasts of South America. You behold a range of exhausted volcanoes. Not a

flame flickers on a single pallid crest. But the situation is still dangerous. There are occasional earthquakes, and ever and anon the dark rumbling of the sea.

The Prime Minister had latterly done little that was calculated to rally the electorate to his side. He had been, a few months before, manœuvred by the Leader of the Opposition into resigning and then taking office again, with the result that his prestige was seriously damaged. When the appeal to the country could no longer be delayed Mr. Gladstone offered the bribe of the abolition of the Income Tax, but he was decisively defeated at the polls. In view of what the next century was to witness it may not be without interest to quote the opinion of *The Times* on these tactics: "The last purpose to which the surplus ought to have been applied was the purchase of a majority for the Government. . . . The precedent of including a Budget in an Election Address will assuredly not be repeated. But for the defeat which ensued, Mr. Gladstone's innovation might readily have degenerated into the worst form of political corruption. His manifesto was simply an appeal to the selfishness of the middle class."

Mr. Chamberlain failed at Sheffield, but his defeat was to some extent due to local differences among the supporters of Mr. Gladstone. He had himself very strong views on the way in which the issue had been put before the electors, and he wrote an article for the *Fortnightly Review* entitled "The Next Page of the Liberal Programme" which was at once topical and prophetic: after pointing out the difficulty of distinguishing "the party of the moderate Tories who do not practise their principles from the party of the

moderate Liberals who have no principles to practise", he proceeded:

The Liberal Party will never regain power on terms like these. Much as Mr. Gladstone is honoured and respected it is not for his credit or for ours that we should take him back as we recover a stolen watch—on the condition that no questions are asked. . . . Anything would have been better than the course actually followed. At a moment's notice the dissolution was resolved on, and Mr. Gladstone promulgated through the country the meanest public document that has ever, in like circumstances, proceeded from a statesman of the first rank.

. . . If our middle class, and the Press which panders to their prejudices, cannot reconcile themselves to the altered situation, and devise some better means of settling trade disputes than the rough arbitrament of strikes and lock-outs, they may wake some day to find their terrors realized, and themselves in face of an organization whose numbers will be irresistible and whose settled principles will be hostility to Capital and distrust of the monied class.

Two years after his defeat, Mr. Chamberlain was returned at a by-election for his own city of Birmingham, and he thus enjoyed the great advantage of entering the House of Commons whilst his party was in Opposition.

In his early days at Westminster it must be admitted that he made his own position unnecessarily difficult by the intemperance of his language. The mid-Victorian period was one of political decorum, but the new member for Birmingham rated both avowed enemies and lukewarm friends in a manner reminiscent

of Charles James Fox. Mention has already been made of his gibe at Mr. Disraeli, and the incident was by no means exceptional. Nor was this all, for he often couched his arguments in such provocative phraseology as to occasion general alarm, as when he declared at a working-men's demonstration: "I ask what ransom will properly pay for the security which it enjoys?" This last utterance was made when he was already a Cabinet Minister, and it is sufficient proof that office in no way moderated his tone. This explains why he remained for the rest of his life the centre of controversy, for few statesmen of modern times have aroused as much enthusiasm on the one side and hatred on the other.

It is always interesting to see what the great Parliamentarians thought of the House of Commons when they first took their seats. Mr. Chamberlain was not very sympathetically received owing to his recent attack on the Prime Minister, and he also made the mistake of putting on his hat before being sworn in, which was considered by many to be a deliberate affront. So many rumours had been circulated concerning him that "Toby M.P."¹ sarcastically described the surprise of one Conservative member at seeing the newcomer in a coat and even a waistcoat. He has left on record his own feelings during those early weeks: "I never had any idea till now how tiresome speeches might be—hitherto they have seemed delightful, but perhaps there is a difference between making them and listening to them . . . if it wasn't for the smoking room the place would be intolerable. I wonder how Dixon² stood it so long. Bright has been here so long that he

¹ Henry W. Lucy, in *Punch*.

² His predecessor in the representation of Birmingham.

work which lay before him, but as a Cabinet Minister the greater part of his time seemed to be consumed in differences of opinion with his colleagues. Indeed, the ministry was little more than a veiled coalition of Whigs, Liberals, and Radicals. It was united in one thing alone, namely respect for Mr. Gladstone, who combined in himself the offices of Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer. Yet even he proved a source of weakness rather than of strength. At home and abroad he was called upon to solve questions with which he was far less fitted to deal than those of his earlier Premiership. His strength did not lie in the control of foreign politics or the direction of military affairs; nevertheless these were the very problems by which he was to be confronted. The strength of the Government, on the other hand, lay, at any rate during the earlier sessions of the new Parliament, in the weakness of their opponents: as Mr. Winston Churchill writes in the biography of his father, "the Front Opposition Bench, cumbered with the ancient and dreary wreckage of the late administration, was utterly unequal to the Government in eloquence and authority." Indeed, to those who were only able to view the situation from without, the Parliament of 1880 was regarded as a return to what had come to be accepted as the normal state of affairs, that is to say a Conservative minority in the House of Commons. Ever since the overthrow of Sir Robert Peel's administration in the forties the Whigs and Liberals had been in the ascendant and the victory of their opponents in 1874 seemed to have been proved a mere flash in the pan. None of the triumphant host that shouted itself hoarse as the G.O.M. took his seat that spring day of 1880 foresaw that only once again in British history

would their party obtain an independent majority, and that more than one of their chosen leaders would, in a few short years, be fighting on the other side.

Until Mr. Chamberlain was appointed its President the Board of Trade, in spite of its importance to a commercial nation, had not figured very prominently in the public mind: when he became its chief he made it, like the Colonial Office in later years, one of the leading departments. While he was there he was responsible for a Bankruptcy Bill to restrain fraudulent debtors. Those who were adversely affected charged Mr. Chamberlain with political jobbery in the appointment of Official Receivers, but he was able to point out that of the sixty-seven officials appointed he only knew five, and was aware of the politics of but two, while the gentleman who was posted to Birmingham was a Conservative. A Patents Bill to protect the poor inventor was also passed under his auspices. The measure, however, upon which his heart was most set, namely the Merchant Shipping Bill, had to be withdrawn owing to the opposition of vested interests. It was designed to put an end to the scandal of the "coffin ships", and Mr. Chamberlain threw himself into the fight with a zeal which at times outran his discretion. "I know absolutely no trade," he said, "except that of ship-owners, in which it is possible for a man to lose his property and make a profit out of it." In the debate on the Second Reading he named ship after ship; telling how they were lost, who owned them, and what profits were made under the system of over-insurance. He gained in this way the hearts of the sailors, but Mr. Gladstone was not prepared to risk the fate of the ministry on the issue.

In domestic politics the most important measure

of the Government was the extension of the franchise and the re-distribution of seats. The Reform Act of 1884 placed the borough and county electorates on the same footing. Some idea of the scope of this Act can be gathered from the fact that it added about 1,300,000 voters to the register in England, 400,000 in Ireland, and 200,000 in Scotland, of whom a large proportion were in rural areas. In effect, twice as many new electors were created as in 1867, and nearly four times as many as in 1832. For better or for worse Great Britain had become a politically democratic country, and Mr. Chamberlain for one welcomed the fact. To him the extension of the franchise was not an end in itself, but rather the means to an end, namely far-reaching reforms in every department of the national life. The principles which underlay his policy at this time can best be stated in his own words:

I believe that the great difficulty with which we have to deal is the excessive inequality in the distribution of riches. Ignorance, intemperance, immorality and disease—these things are all interdependent and closely connected; and although they are often the cause of poverty, they are still more frequently the consequence of destitution. . . . It is not our duty, it is not our wish, to pull down and abuse the rich, although I do not think that the excessive aggregation of wealth in a few hands is any advantage to anybody; but our object is to raise the general condition of the people.

Sometimes in his advocacy of this policy he used language which frightened his contemporaries. The famous "Ransom" speech has already been mentioned, but it did not stand alone. Of the agricultural

labourers he said: "They have been robbed of their rights in the commons. You cannot go into a single country land in which you will not find that land-owners on each side of the road have already enclosed lands which for centuries have belonged to the people, or that they are not on the point of enclosing them. That is not all. It is going on also with respect to the endowments of the poor." On another occasion he declared that "we have been too long a peer-ridden people, and I hope you will say to them that if they will not bow to the will of the people, they shall lose for ever the authority they have so long abused". In such circumstances it is small wonder that Mr. Chamberlain was the cause of frowns at Buckingham Palace and of a lifting of eyebrows at Hawarden, that Lord Iddesleigh referred to him as Jack Cade and Lord Salisbury as a "Sicilian bandit".

Yet when all is said and done his "unauthorized programme" was in the main but an intelligent anticipation of the course of events. It contained seven principal propositions:

- (1) Free primary education.
- (2) Full local government for the counties.
- (3) Local legislatures on the same footing for the different nationalities of the United Kingdom, but with the Parliament at Westminster unimpaired in powers and status.
- (4) Financial reform by graduated direct taxation in order to pay for increased social services.
- (5) Land reform by giving the labourer a stake in the soil through the creation of small-holdings.
- (6) Disestablishment of State Churches in England, Scotland, and Wales.
- (7) Manhood suffrage and payment of members.

Most of this came to pass in the fullness of time. The first and second points were conceded by a Conservative administration which Mr. Chamberlain supported; the fourth and seventh were eventually carried to extremes of which he would probably have disapproved; Mr. Gladstone ruined all hope of putting the third into practice, to the great detriment of the whole Empire; the sixth soon ceased to interest the electorate, except in Wales; and about the fifth the politicians of all parties are still talking. It is, indeed, an interesting speculation what might have happened, and how far the rise of Socialism might have been checked, had Mr. Chamberlain been given the chance to put his "unauthorized programme" into effect, but just when he seemed on the point of doing so the shadow of Ireland fell across his path.

CHAPTER II

UNIONISM

Whatever criticism may be brought against the eighties of last century they cannot be described as dull. Those who were alive at that time witnessed the disgrace of Majuba and the death of Gordon; they saw a revolution in British politics for which there is hardly a parallel; they were horrified by the cold-blooded murder of the Chief Secretary for Ireland; they cheered the Queen at her Golden Jubilee; and they were amused or shocked by the revelations in the law-courts concerning the private life of one of the ablest of contemporary statesmen, Sir Charles Dilke. Before the decade was finished the meteoric career of Lord Randolph Churchill was for all practical purposes at an end; *The Times* had sustained a blow to its reputation from which it did not recover for many a long year; and the "Uncrowned King of Ireland" was on the eve of being hurled from his throne. So much for what was obvious to the ordinary citizen, but behind the scenes the cynic might have found even greater cause for merriment. One of the most respectable Prime Ministers the country has ever known was corresponding with the leader of the Irish Nationalists through the latter's mistress, herself the wife of another M.P., while this last was acting as the representative of that wife's lover in negotiations with one of the Prime Minister's colleagues. Such was the background of

English politics during the most important years of Mr. Chamberlain's career.

The Irish Question, and the passions which it unloosed, are so remote to the present generation that some little description is necessary to re-create the atmosphere when Mr. Chamberlain unfurled the standard of Unionism.

In its modern form the problem of Ireland was first posed by Mr. Butt, who had originally been a Conservative, in the Parliament of 1874. Mr. Butt was a man of great culture and moderate views; he had been a Professor of Political Economy; and his only weakness was the procreation of children outside wedlock. He meant to advance the cause of Ireland by purely constitutional means, but he received little encouragement from the English ministers. In the session of 1876, for example, nine measures dealing with important Irish questions were introduced by Butt and his followers, but all save two were rejected. "What am I to say?" one of the Law Officers asked Mr. Disraeli when Irish business was before the House. "Speak," replied the other, "for fourteen minutes and say nothing." The Irish learnt their lesson, and substituted Parnell for Butt. Lord John Russell's saying had proved true: "Your oppression taught them to hate—your concessions to brave you; you exhibited to them how scanty was the stream of your bounty, and how full the tribute of your fear."

Cold and proud, Charles Stewart Parnell was the very antithesis of the Celts who adored him, and it was not until the closing years of his life that the world at large realized of what depths of feeling that austere man was capable. He had not long succeeded Mr. Butt before he showed that he had discarded the gloves

with which the other had fought. In September, 1880, he made a speech at Ennis enunciating the doctrine that if a tenant took a farm from which his neighbour had been evicted he must be "isolated from his kind as if he were a leper of old". The first victim of this process was a Captain Boycott, agent to Lord Erne, who added his name to the English dictionary. Mr. Parnell made no secret of his use of the agrarian agitation as a means to gain Home Rule. "I would not have taken off my coat," he declared, "and gone to this work, if I had not known that we were laying the foundation in this movement for the regeneration of our legislative independence." He ruled his followers at Westminster with an iron hand, and deliberately imposed isolation on them in order to ensure their fidelity. At the same time they were encouraged to become specialists in procedure in order that they might the better advance their cause. So the struggle began; it was carried on in Ireland by the bullet from behind the wall, by the "driving" of cattle, and by the maiming of horses; and at Westminster by a policy of obstruction which resulted in the introduction of the closure, and the severe curtailment of the rights of the private member.

The principal difficulty experienced by English statesmen of all shades of opinion in dealing with Mr. Parnell was that they never understood him. They were continually thinking, after the manner of Englishmen, in terms of compromise and Parliamentary business. On his part, he was quite prepared, if he did not get what he wanted, to make Parliamentary government impossible. The rules of the game meant nothing to him, and if the whole British Constitution went down in the fight, he did not care. This was, of

course, a safer line to take then than it was subsequently to become, for the alternative to a subverted constitution was not yet dictatorship, which would not have suited the Irish at all: it was only chaos, which would have suited them very well indeed. By temperament Mr. Parnell was a Conservative, and, like the majority of his followers, he would have felt happier working with the Conservatives, but he was the last man to let sentimental considerations (save where Mrs. O'Shea was concerned) govern his conduct, and he was quite prepared to sell his wares in the best market.

There was another aspect of the Irish problem which English statesmen, in their probity and innocence, by no means always grasped. In course of time agitation became a vested interest, and a good many occupations would be gone if there were no more "wrongs" to right. When one English party or the other made considerable and perfectly sincere efforts to remedy this or that social or economic grievance, it generally found its purpose frustrated by the Irish Nationalists themselves, and those concerned were puzzled at such an attitude: it had perplexed Mr. Gladstone and it was to perplex Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, while it was the ruin of men like Mr. Wyndham. The explanation was that the Nationalist machine was always fearful that the Irish people would be content with something short of Home Rule, and therefore resisted any reform at all. The morality of such an attitude may be questionable, but of the attitude itself there can be no doubt, and it did not render the relations between England and Ireland any easier.

Mr. Chamberlain's position was clear from the beginning. In 1881 he adopted, in a speech at Liverpool, the standpoint from which he never departed:

I say to Ireland what the Liberals or Republicans of the North said to the Southern States of America, "The Union must be preserved." Within these limits there is nothing which you may not ask and hope to obtain. Equal laws, equal justice, equal opportunities, equal prosperity—these shall be freely accorded to you. Your wishes shall be our guide, your prejudices shall be by us respected, your interests shall be our interests, but nature and your position have forged indissoluble links which cannot be sundered without being fraught with consequences of misery and ruin to both our countries, and which, therefore, we shall use all the resources of the Empire to keep intact.

He was opposed at the same time to coercion, which he described as "not a fact for insolent exultation; it is a blot on civilization". It was only some years later that he observed regretfully in a conversation with Mr. Balfour: "The Tories go in for coercion. I believe that if that could be carried out consistently for five years it would succeed." In this last observation he had the support of Mr. Parnell himself. One day Mr. Asquith in a moment of youthful enthusiasm remarked to the Irish leader: "Of one thing I am quite certain, we can never govern Ireland by coercion." To which Mr. Parnell replied: "I'm not so sure: you've never tried it long enough or consistently enough."

In 1884 Mr. Chamberlain was equally emphatic:

I can never consent to regard Ireland as a separate people with the inherent rights of an absolutely independent community. . . . Accordingly, if Nationalism means separation, I for one am prepared to resist it. I see in it the probability, almost the certainty, of dangerous complications,

and an antagonism which would be injurious to the interests of the larger country and fatal to the prosperity of the smaller. Sooner than yield on this point I would govern Ireland by force to the end of the chapter.

Nothing, one would have imagined, could be plainer or more consistent, yet Lord Salisbury wrote to Mr. Balfour two years later expressing approval of the gibe in the *Pall Mall Gazette* that Mr. Chamberlain was "as touchy as a schoolgirl and as implacable as Juno", to which he added: "The personal element is very strong. He will never make a strong leader. He has not yet persuaded himself that he has any convictions; and therein lies Gladstone's infinite superiority."

Mr. Chamberlain's determination to oppose Gladstonian Home Rule was thus no sudden one, nor was it based upon ignorance of what was at stake, for he had a very special knowledge, if not of Ireland herself, at any rate of those who spoke for her at Westminster. Although his own department, the Board of Trade, was not in any way affected, he took so serious a view of the problem that he was continually pressing it upon the notice of Mr. Gladstone, with the result that he incurred no small measure of unpopularity among the Whigs. It was through his good offices that Mr. Parnell was released from Kilmainham jail, and he was long on the most friendly terms with the Irish leader. In due course, however, he became suspicious of the latter's intentions, and he finally broke off the negotiations he had been conducting through Captain O'Shea: this individual, it may be added, had not rendered an understanding between the principals any easier by continually suppressing portions of their communications to one another. In any event it is doubtful

whether an agreement would have been reached, for Mr. Parnell had for the time being come to the conclusion that more might be obtained from the Conservatives, who seemed willing enough to treat, and with whom his natural sympathies lay. From the point of view of political tactics he was right, for if he came to an understanding with Lord Salisbury he could be certain that his Bill would pass the House of Lords, while Mr. Gladstone could, or seemed as if he could, guarantee him a majority in the Lower House alone.

The General Election of 1885 rendered Mr. Parnell master of the House of Commons, and he was quite ready to sell himself to the highest bidder. That soon proved to be Mr. Gladstone. At the time, and for long afterwards, it was an article of belief with the opponents of the G.O.M. that he was swayed by no higher motive than a determination to remain in office at all costs, for the Irish had just enabled him to turn out the "caretakers' government" of Lord Salisbury. It is not possible to hold this view to-day without serious injustice to a very great man. Mr. Gladstone was seventy-seven, and he was still living in the days of his youth. Bred, as he described himself, "under the shadow of the great name of Canning," he was a Canningite still, and he saw in the Irish but the Spanish colonists and the Greeks of his earlier years. It was this, rather than political chicanery, that reduced him to the state so admirably described by Cardinal Manning in his diary: "I forsook all things for faith; he has forsaken his whole political past for Ireland. He is as isolated now as I was then. And this makes me turn to him. We are at last and at least agreed in this."

At this point it may not be out of place to give the details of the measure which Mr. Gladstone put before the House of Commons in April, 1886, and which caused Mr. Chamberlain to sever his connection with Liberalism. There was to be an Irish Parliament sitting in Dublin which was to legislate for Ireland, and to control the Executive. Irish peers and M.P.'s were no longer to sit at Westminster. The Dublin Parliament was to have no voice in questions concerning the Crown, the Army and Navy, and foreign and colonial relations, but within a period of two years the constabulary was to pass under its control. With the exception of so much of the customs and excise as was necessary to meet liabilities to England, taxation was also placed in its hands. The Irish share of the Imperial burdens was settled at one-fourteenth instead of the two-seventeenths fixed by the Union. Safeguards were provided for the protection of the Protestant minority, while the establishment or endowment of any religious denomination was expressly forbidden. To solve the social problems of Ireland a Land Bill was also introduced by which landowners could sell their property to a certain State authority at twenty years' purchase, to be retailed subsequently to small-holders. The first cost to the English taxpayer was calculated to be not less than £120,000,000, which was to be raised by the issue of new stock.

The effect of these proposals upon the ordinary elector has been well summed up by Dr. Bright, sometime Master of University College, Oxford, in his *History of England*: "Far more than any logical dilemma involved in the Bill, it was the character of the Irish and the Irish Party which chiefly stood in the way of its acceptance. It was not given to the majority of men to

feel the same faith in the good results of justice as was felt by Mr. Gladstone. It seemed an extraordinary thing to dream of handing over the government of a country, and with it the fate of a loyal minority who were opposed in every point to the popular feeling, to men who had shown themselves so violent and disloyal and so ready to set contracts at defiance; yet by the enactments of the Bill it was contemplated that the judicial power, and finances (with one exception), and, after a brief interval, all the police, were to be entrusted to the party of disorder. Were the securities worth anything more than the paper on which they were written? Would not the payment to the English Exchequer be regarded before long as a hostile tribute to be refused? Would the powerful priesthood of the Roman Church be contented to maintain a position of tolerant neutrality?"

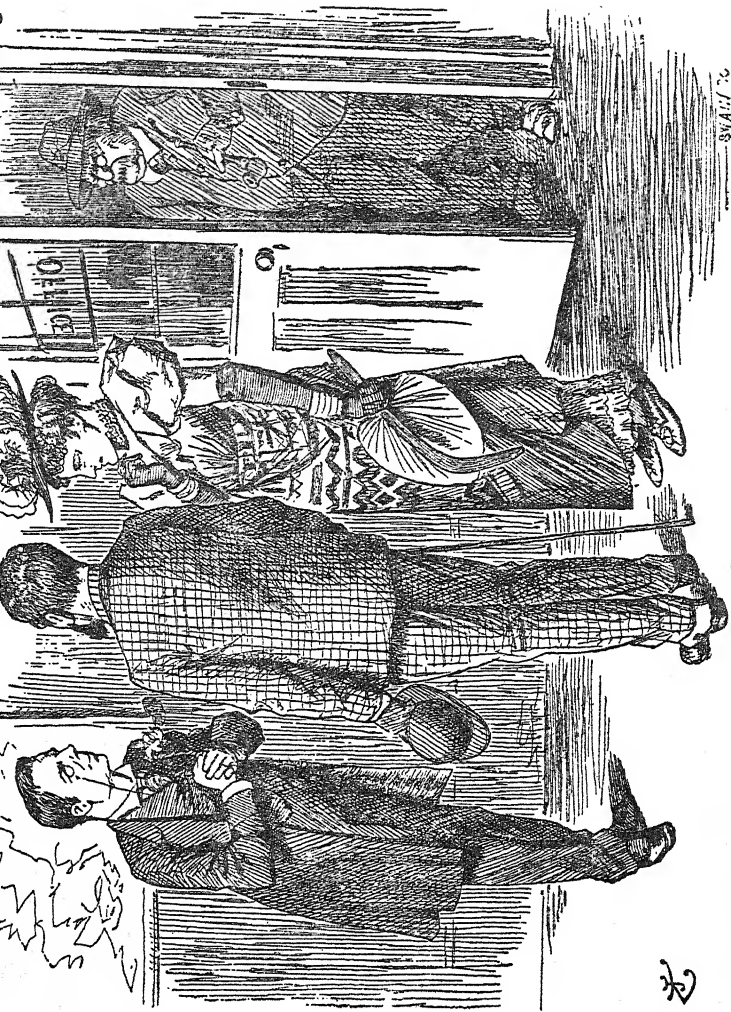
That Mr. Chamberlain was by no means opposed to some form of local government for Ireland is proved by his "unauthorized programme", but the Prime Minister's proposals went much further than he was prepared to go. He had joined Mr. Gladstone's third ministry as President of the Local Government Board (now the Ministry of Health) after refusing to be First Lord of the Admiralty, and after soliciting the Colonial Secretaryship in vain, upon a definite understanding:

I have explained my own preference for an attempt to come to terms with the Irish members, on the basis of a more limited scheme of Local Government, coupled with proposals for a settlement of the Land and perhaps also of the Education question. You have been kind enough, after hearing these opinions, to repeat your request that I should join your Government, and you have explained

that in this case I shall "retain unlimited liberty of judgment and rejection" on any scheme that may ultimately be proposed.

When the Prime Minister's proposals were laid before the Cabinet, Mr. Chamberlain at once took strong exception to them. His objections were to four points in particular, viz. the removal of the Irish members from Westminster, the abandonment of the right of taxation at Westminster, the surrender of the appointment of judges and magistrates, and the supremacy accorded to the Irish Executive "in all matters not specially excluded from its competence". In March, 1886, he resigned, and in his letter to Mr. Gladstone he said that the Bill was "tantamount to a proposal for separation. My public utterances and my private convictions are absolutely opposed to such a policy, and I feel that the differences which have been disclosed are so vital that I can no longer entertain the hope of being of service to the Government".

It was no easy choice for an ambitious man to make, and it required all the Chamberlain courage to make it. Daily, almost hourly, he was receiving letters from Mr. Labouchere beseeching him to waive his objections for the almost certain reversion of the Premiership, when he would have the opportunity of putting all his ideas into practice. We know now that Mr. Gladstone continued to lead the Liberal Party for another seven years, and that when he retired the Queen would probably have sent for Lord Rosebery even had Mr. Chamberlain been still a Radical; we know, too, what immense services to the Empire the latter was to perform as a Unionist, and what a legacy he was to leave his country in his sons. All this was hidden from the President of the Local Government Board



THE COLONIAL MATRIMONIAL AGENT.

MR. J. G. P. CH. M. N. (Manager), "MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS—IF YOU WILL ONLY LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU BOTH WANT, I WILL SEE WHAT I CAN DO FOR YOU!"

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Punch, December 14, 1895

in those far-off days of March, 1886. He only knew that his decision had sent him out into the wilderness to associate with those whom he had always attacked; that it had broken his old friendship with Morley, who was soon to compare him with Casca, and with Dilke; and that in his own city of Birmingham his henchman Schnadhorst was working up the caucus against him. Yet he never wavered. He preferred his own soul to the world.

Mr. Chamberlain has left his own account of the situation which confronted him:

My position was very difficult and anxious. I foresaw that, if I were compelled to vote against Mr. Gladstone, I should be singled out as the cause of his defeat, and should be the mark of the most bitter animosity from that section of the party which supported him. I also saw that in this case the Liberal Party would be broken up, and its influence and usefulness destroyed for many years. My own position as a Radical would make complete union with the Conservatives very difficult. It was doubtful if the reforms which I had been endeavouring to bring to the front would commend themselves to them, and I should then find myself in alliance with a party from whom I could expect no sympathy for what had hitherto been the main objects of my public life. Of course, I should sacrifice all hope of ever again having any office, whereas as Mr. Gladstone's colleague I had the best chance of succeeding him in the leadership of the Liberal Party.

I had therefore every possible inducement to come to terms if possible. On the other hand, I was so strongly impressed with the dangerous character of the Home Rule Bill, that I was deter-

mined to give up everything rather than allow this measure to be proceeded with in its original form.

As always, personal considerations played their part. There had never been any great sympathy between Mr. Gladstone and his lieutenant and the Prime Minister was generally ready to believe the worst of Mr. Chamberlain. Though both men had a commercial origin, they were as different in character as were their respective cities of Liverpool and Birmingham. The older man was profoundly interested in theology, and in another age might well have been a great Churchman: the younger took his recreation reading French novels, and was more attracted by crucibles than chasubles. This is not to say that if they had been on better terms personally there would have been no Liberal split over the Home Rule Bill, but rather that had Mr. Gladstone appreciated his colleague he would probably have preferred to lean on him rather than on Mr. Parnell. Possibly the Liberal leader was influenced by those round him, who had no love for Mr. Chamberlain. It is one of the dangers to which men in the position of Mr. Gladstone are exposed that they tend to become surrounded by a group of admiring hangers-on whose primary object is to cut the master off from the rest of the world. In the present instance they succeeded only too well.

Once it was clear that nothing could induce the Prime Minister to deviate from the path he had chosen events began to move fast. Lord Hartington, Mr. Goschen, Mr. Bright, and many others fell away, while Mr. Chamberlain made sure of his hold upon Birmingham. At one o'clock in the morning on 8th June, 1886, the vital division was taken. Mr. Chamberlain had no doubt that the Bill would be beaten, but others were

not so sanguine. As the Noes shuffled by Lord Randolph Churchill was heard to exclaim, "There are not three hundred men with us," but he proved wrong. When the tellers came in the Government Whips stood on the left of the table, for the Bill had been defeated by 343 votes to 313. Amid the cheers and counter-cheers which followed the announcement of the result, Mr. Parnell, pointing to Mr. Chamberlain, remarked quietly to a colleague: "There goes the man who killed Home Rule."

From the House of Commons the Prime Minister appealed to the country. No less than 93 of his old followers had voted against the Second Reading, and their seats were naturally the main objective of the Gladstonian attack. Only half of these were Mr. Chamberlain's Radicals, the rest being Whigs or Liberals. When the final results were announced, the magnitude of Mr. Gladstone's defeat was apparent. The Conservative strength had risen from 250 to 316, while of the Liberal Unionists 78 had come through the fight successfully, but the number of orthodox Liberals had fallen from 334 to 191, to which must be added the 85 Irish Nationalists. Mr. Chamberlain carried all the Birmingham seats, as he was to do for the rest of his life, and he and Lord Hartington were now in the position held by Mr. Parnell during the previous twelve months, that is to say that both Lord Salisbury and Mr. Gladstone were dependent upon their good offices.

Yet on the morrow of this triumph Mr. Chamberlain felt his position more hopeless than ever. He was estranged from those with whom he had been accustomed to work, and the Conservatives, with the exception of Lord Randolph Churchill, he mistrusted.

He saw, as we have seen, his projects of reform postponed until the Greek Kalends, while he was the daily object of a stream of abuse of which the following is an extremely mild specimen:

Dare to be a Joseph,
Dare to stand alone,
Dare to live at Birmingham,
Sitting on a throne.

Dare to tumble over
Everyone you can,
Dare to shower rotten eggs
On the Grand Old Man.

Dare to tell the public
What a sage you've grown,
Dare to prove you've one idea—
Birmingham alone.

Dare to praise the Powerful
Every time you speak,
Dare to "slate" the Irish,
Dare to "slang" the weak.

Dare to be a Unionist—
Sight for gods and men!
Dare to promise lots of things,
But never tell us *When*.

Dare to back up Jesse,¹
No matter what he do,
Dare to stick together—
The Party made of two.

Dare to be a "Statesman",
Winning Tory cheers,
Dare to tread the twisting road
Which leads you to the Peers.

¹ Jesse Collings, M.P.

What particularly irritated Mr. Chamberlain was that he should be held up to ridicule and scorn as a turn-coat when it was his old party, not he, that had changed. Sometimes this resentment, combined with a feeling of frustration, made him very bitter against his old chief. When the latter laid on the Liberal Unionists the blame for postponing Liberal legislation and especially the Disestablishment of the Church, his anger blazed forth:

Whether the process occupies a generation or a century, "poor little Wales" must wait until Mr. Parnell is satisfied, and Mr. Gladstone's policy adopted. They will not wait alone. The crofters of Scotland and the agricultural labourers of England will keep them company. Thirty-two millions of people must go without much-needed legislation because three million are disloyal. . . . So long as the majority of the Liberal Party is committed to proposals which a large section of Liberals and Radicals firmly believe to be dangerous to the best interests of the United Kingdom, unjust to the minority of the Irish people, and certain to end in the disruption of the Empire, so long the party will remain shattered and impotent, and all reform will be indefinitely postponed.

In particular he resented the claim of Mr. Parnell to dictate the terms of an Irish settlement. "We are told," he said to a Belfast audience, "that it is absolutely necessary that any plan for a settlement of the Irish question must be acceptable to Mr. Parnell. What does that mean? If it means that Mr. Parnell, or someone behind him—someone who pays the piper and pulls the strings—is to be dictator in this matter, and to impose upon the Parliament at Westminster the final

settlement of the affairs of an integral part of the United Kingdom—then, I say, such a proceeding is a surrender which is abject, humiliating and dangerous.” Mr. Chamberlain was certainly subject at this period of his career to an inward disquiet which he was never to know again, and it sometimes made him unjust, as for instance when he jeered at the Irish Nationalists as a “kept party” supported by “the subscriptions from the servant girls of America”. In the opening weeks of 1887 there was a Round Table Conference to see if a reconciliation with Mr. Gladstone was possible, but it came to nothing, and Mr. Chamberlain was left to plough his lonely furrow. All the same he never lost his admiration for his old chief: “I went to the House to-day, and heard Mr. Gladstone’s speech; in argument it was thin and effective, but as a specimen of eloquence and debating skill it really was wonderful. It is extraordinary to what a pitch of perfection the old man has brought himself ‘as a talking machine’.”

In spite, or rather because, of his apparent isolation Mr. Chamberlain exercised enormous power in the House of Commons, for his support was by no means to be taken by the Government for granted. In this his position resembled that of his elder son after the General Election of 1931, when Sir Austen’s opinion was always anxiously awaited by Mr. MacDonald, Mr. Baldwin, and—by no means least—the Government Whips. A respected statesman in such circumstances can exercise enormous influence upon legislation and policy. Outwardly Mr. Chamberlain gave no sign of his sickness at heart, and in his speeches he was at his most pugnacious, but he wanted, for the only time in his life, to get away from politics for a spell, and he talked of visiting the Empire overseas. He had

always been very fond of travelling, and before he became a Minister hardly a year elapsed during which he did not visit some part of the Continent partly for pleasure and partly to satisfy his insatiable thirst for information. Very often he took his children with him, and I remember Sir Austen telling me of an amusing incident which occurred on the Andalusian railway between Algeciras and Bobadilla. The train was hours late by Mr. Chamberlain's watch, but it arrived at each station at the scheduled time by the clock on the platform. The Chamberlain party was mystified, until the future Sir Austen looked out of the window and saw a porter setting, with the aid of a broom-handle, the hands of the station clock to the nominal time of arrival. The Spaniards were determined to leave nothing undone that might impress their distinguished visitor, even to inculcating the belief that their trains ran to time.

In the autumn of 1886 Mr. Chamberlain visited the Near East, and was received by the Sultan in an hour's audience. He found Abdul the Damned, as most Englishmen considered him, "a little timid-looking man who speaks in a low voice, and looks as if he found his Sultanship a great bore." However, Mr. Chamberlain "had a cigarette with His Majesty, and gave him a lot of good advice, in return for which he gave me a gold box covered with diamonds". From Constantinople he went to Athens, where he dined with that very wise monarch, King George I, and was thoroughly at home, for he had been an ardent Phil-Hellene since his earliest days. He was soon to take a more extended journey, and one that was to have the most profound influence upon the rest of his life, but first it will be as well to finish with the question of Ireland

so far as it concerned him. Unfortunately we shall have to recur to it in the career of his elder son.

At the General Election of 1892 the Liberals gained a number of seats, but they were still in a marked minority in England itself, and it was only with the help of the eighty-one Nationalists that Mr. Gladstone had any hope of regaining office. Lord Salisbury met Parliament, and was defeated on a vote of No Confidence. The Liberal leader thereupon formed his fourth, and last, administration, but although he advocated extensive reforms in every sphere of the national life in what was known as the Newcastle programme, it was clear that the Irish Nationalists would demand the immediate introduction of a Home Rule Bill as the price of their support, and so it proved. Once more Mr. Chamberlain was shown to be right in his contention that so long as Mr. Gladstone was committed to the Irish the path of English reform, so far as Liberalism was concerned, would be blocked by Home Rule. Mr. Parnell, indeed, was dead, but his successors were no less exacting in their terms.

When the Government of Ireland Bill was introduced it proved to differ considerably from that of 1886. The Irish Legislature was to consist, like the English, of two bodies, a Council and an Assembly: they were, however, to be elected by different constituencies, the first by those rated at £20, and the second by the existing voters. The Dublin Parliament was to concern itself exclusively with Irish affairs; for questions relating to war and peace, treason, aliens, and external trade were withdrawn from its jurisdiction. The Viceroy was to be appointed for a period of six years, and he was to be advised by an executive committee drawn from the Irish Privy Council, which

was to act as his Cabinet: subject to the approval of the Queen, and the advice of this Cabinet, the Viceroy had the right to veto Irish Bills. In the event of disagreement between the two branches of the Legislature they were to meet together. An appeal lay to the Privy Council in London should the Irish Parliament overstep its constitutional rights. As for the constabulary, they were to remain under English administration during the period of transition, and were afterwards to be gradually absorbed into a local police. So far as the relations between Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom were concerned, Mr. Gladstone departed considerably from his proposals of seven years before. Eighty Irish members were to remain at Westminster, but they were not to vote on questions which expressly concerned Great Britain, on taxes not levied in Ireland, or on the appropriation of money for anything except Imperial services. The financial arrangements were also modified, and the payment of a lump sum by Ireland disappeared from the Bill.

If, as is improbable, Mr. Gladstone thought he would convert any of the opponents of his previous measure, he was soon disappointed. Criticism fastened on the position of the Irish members at Westminster, the "In and Out" clause as it came to be called, and tempers were not long in rising. "The Government," said Mr. Chamberlain, "are using their opportunity to betray the interests of the country, sacrificing them to men who have been the bane of their own country, but who shall not be the ruin of ours." To this the Prime Minister replied by accusing Mr. Chamberlain of using "language of habitual, gross and enormous exaggeration"; he "constantly and deliberately, and

with the utmost confidence and infallibility, ascribes to men who have a right to stand on a level with him, and who were at one time his colleagues and supposed to be his friends, motives for their acts the direct contrary of that which they state themselves, and motives which they indignantly disclaim". Nor were the Conservatives backward in abuse. "An intolerable, an imbecile, an accursed Bill," was what Lord Salisbury termed it; while Lord Randolph Churchill declared that the Irish leaders were "political brigands and nihilists", and that the Government had been "as capricious as a woman, and as impulsive and passionate as a horde of barbarians".

There was no doubt who was the spear-head of the attack on the Bill. To quote Sir Henry Lucy: "Anyone who closely watches the course of events in Committee knows that the real Leader of the Opposition, the life and soul of obstruction, is Mr. Chamberlain. It is he that sets the battle in array, sends out skirmishing parties, and is ever ready to lead an attack in person. The rank and file are already tired of a business that interferes with their social arrangements. . . . Needs must when Mr. Chamberlain drives. He sits there in constant attendance, relentless, implacable. . . . It is only when Mr. Chamberlain steps into the arena and Mr. Gladstone swiftly turns to face him that benches fill, drooping heads are raised, eyes brighten, the Chamber resounds with cheers and counter-cheers, and the dry bones of the debate rattle into strenuous life."

In face of such opposition progress was slow, and in order to expedite the passage of the Bill the Prime Minister introduced the guillotine. This still further embittered the situation. Mr. Balfour stigmatized it

as an attempt to silence the voice of Great Britain, and Mr. Chamberlain declared that Ministers were "the slaves of the Irish Party"; "there," said he, pointing to the Irish members, "sit the men who pull the strings of the Prime Minister of England." All through the summer of 1893 the debates continued, while members became every day more exasperated, until in August there took place a scene of violence probably unprecedented in the history of the House of Commons. Mr. Chamberlain, in committee, had sneered at the regularity with which Liberals followed their leader. "The Prime Minister calls 'black', and they say 'it is good'; he calls 'white', and they say 'it is better'. It is always the voice of a god; never since the time of Herod has there been such slavish adulation." At the name of "Herod" a furious storm arose, amidst which were heard cries of "Judas". It was in vain that the Chairman tried to enforce the closure. In the middle of the uproar blows were exchanged, and for some minutes there was pandemonium, to which only the return of the Speaker put an end.

Finally, the Bill was carried by a majority of thirty-four, but only to be rejected by 419 votes to forty-one in the House of Lords. For the remainder of Mr. Chamberlain's active life Home Rule was no longer a live political issue.

CHAPTER III

THE EMPIRE-BUILDER

It should by now be abundantly clear that Mr. Chamberlain developed with his opportunities and responsibilities, and he was very far from being fully formed when he first entered public life. The younger Pitt was at twenty very much what he was to be at forty, but this was certainly not the case with Mr. Chamberlain. With him one thing led to another. His experiences as a teacher in Sunday and night schools had convinced him of the inadequacy of the national system of education; his efforts to remedy this led him to play the leading part in the affairs of what had become his own city; and from the council chamber in Birmingham to the House of Commons was an easy and natural step. Had Mr. Gladstone not made Home Rule the chief plank in his platform Mr. Chamberlain might well have confined his activities to social and political reform for the rest of his life, but the necessity for examining the relations between Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom drew him to consider the problem of the Empire as a whole, and the Radical Unionist developed into the great Imperialist. His hostility to the Second Home Rule Bill was more marked than that to its predecessor because he had in the interval become a more fervent believer in the unity of the Empire. Later still, as a corollary, he was to embark upon his last crusade of all, that for Protection.

In the eighties of last century few statesmen gave

more than a passing thought to the Empire overseas, and most Englishmen, at any rate in their hearts, probably shared the opinion of Turgot that colonies, like fruit, were destined to fall off the tree when they were ripe. This had certainly been the experience, not only of Great Britain, but also of Spain and Portugal. Nor so many years had passed since Lord Glenelg, on being appointed Secretary for War and Colonies, sent for a map to see where the colonies were. Mr. Gladstone, as late as the Jameson Raid, said: "I have always maintained that we are bound by ties of honour and conscience to them, but the idea that the colonies add to the strength of the mother-country appears to me to be as dark a superstition as any that existed in the Middle Ages." Mr. Disraeli in later life displayed prescience, but he had no first-hand knowledge of the problem.

To some extent the movement towards Imperialism at this time was, with the mass of the English people as with Mr. Chamberlain himself, a reaction against Home Rule. Mr. Gladstone had foundered on the rock of the opposition of the predominant partner to any weakening of the union between the British Isles, and, as we have seen, this began a new era in the nation's history. The great wave of Liberal progress, which had on the whole swept on unbroken since the Reform Act of 1832, was checked; and the Radicals, whose forms of thought under the powerful inspiration of Mr. Chamberlain had been gradually affecting the outlook of the whole country, found themselves compelled to adapt their ideas to the old traditions venerated by their new allies. The result was to be as happy as it was unexpected. The reason, though few perceived it, was that there was much in Radicalism

which was reminiscent of an earlier Toryism, before the latter became contaminated by wealth and Whiggery, and so the ingredients were mixed with comparative ease. Conservatism owes most of its vitality to its remarkable skill in attracting recruits from outside its ranks, and the reinforcement it received with the Liberal Unionists enabled it to survive the great disaster of 1906, and to become the party of stability and progress after the war. Had Mr. Gladstone shown a readiness to compromise in 1886 it might have been the Liberals who would have been in power during the greater part of the next fifty years.

Mention has already been made of the lead taken by Mr. Chamberlain in the fight against Home Rule, and of his influence upon Conservative legislation, and it is not too much to say that he was the inspirer of policy for the two decades which followed his break with Mr. Gladstone. One of the first to realize what was happening was Lord Salisbury. So early as the beginning of 1888 he told a meeting of his followers at Liverpool that they must expect to find a strong flavour of Liberalism in the proposals of his administration, and he urged them, for the sake of the great Imperial object which they all had in view, to consent to any compromise that might be necessary. On the whole his advice was scrupulously followed. There were the usual storms in a tea-cup about the allocation of seats, but they died down, and the leaders of both wings of the coalition very wisely allowed nearly a generation to elapse before the fusion of the two organizations was attempted. Liberal Unionism thus saved Conservatism by compelling it to return to the true sources of its faith, the preaching of Mr. Disraeli and the practice of Mr. Pitt.

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

Curiously enough, it seems to have been that somewhat prosaic and unimaginative personality, Mr. W. H. Smith, who first started Mr. Chamberlain on his career as an Empire-builder. For some years past there had been a triangular dispute between Great Britain, Canada, and the United States regarding fishery rights off the coasts of Canada and Newfoundland. The position had latterly got out of hand, and all three parties decided on a conference at Washington in the hope of arriving at a settlement. Mr. W. H. Smith, who was leader of the House of Commons, had known of the desire of Mr. Chamberlain for a temporary change of scene after the stress of the preceding years, and he asked the latter if he would like to go to Washington as the head of the British delegation at the forthcoming conference. As an ex-President of the Board of Trade no one could be better qualified. Mr. Chamberlain readily consented, and the Queen's approval was easily obtained. The mission was to transform Mr. Chamberlain's whole outlook, for, as Mr. Garvin well observes, the man who went to America never came back.

In retrospect, the actual purpose of his visit seems of little importance, and may be dismissed in a few sentences. After several months of hard bargaining an agreement was reached with President Cleveland and his Democratic administration, but it was promptly negatived by the Senate, where there was a Republican majority. However, Mr. Chamberlain and his fellow-negotiators, foreseeing this possibility, had added a protocol which provided for a temporary *modus vivendi*, and for many years this took the place of a more permanent arrangement. When he returned to England, Mr. Chamberlain was offered a G.C.B., but

he declined the honour, and asked for a signed photograph of the Queen in its place.

Far more important than the actual mission was the fact that during this visit Mr. Chamberlain became engaged to Miss Mary Endicott, daughter of the Secretary for War in Mr. Cleveland's Cabinet, whom he subsequently married as his third wife, and who was destined to survive him. As soon as she was presented to her, Queen Victoria noted: "Mrs. Chamberlain is very pretty and young-looking, and is very ladylike with a nice frank open manner." The engagement had to be kept secret for some months, for the Presidential election was about to take place, and had it become known that the daughter of one of Mr. Cleveland's ministers was about to marry the arch-enemy of Home Rule, the Irish vote would have been lost to the Democrats in advance. As it happened, there was no real need for the postponement of the marriage, since the President was beaten by Mr. Benjamin Harrison, the Republican candidate.

Mr. Chamberlain's marriage seemed to contemporaries to change his whole outlook. It gave him back his old optimism, and there was a freshness about him which they had not observed for many a long day. In addition, he had liked the New World, both the United States and Canada, and found it stimulating, and it liked him. He took the opportunity of getting to know the Dominion and its problems, and of meeting its leading men. When he spoke in Toronto there was a lyrical note in his speech which had been absent from his previous utterances. One example will suffice. Speaking of the Anglo-Saxon race he said:

What is the fact in regard to these peoples, the older and the younger nations? Our past is theirs. Their future is ours. You cannot if you would break the invisible bond which binds us together. Their forefathers are our forefathers. They worshipped at our shrines. They sleep in our churchyards. They helped to make our institutions, our literature and our laws. These things are their heritage as much as ours. If you stood up to deny it, your speech and countenance, your manner of life and institutions would all combine to betray you.

Mr. Chamberlain did not a little during this visit to improve the relations between the two great Anglo-Saxon countries. There were, indeed, many obstacles still to be overcome before there was real friendship, and Venezuela lay ahead, but the way had been prepared, and no one would have been more delighted than Mr. Chamberlain had he been spared to see the day when his own fellow-countrymen and those of his wife were fighting shoulder to shoulder in defence of their common civilization.

When he returned to London he lost no time in giving expression to the opinions which he had formed on the other side of the Atlantic. On 9th April, 1888, he was entertained to dinner at the Devonshire Club, and in reply to the toast of his health, proposed by the Gladstonian Lord Granville, he foreshadowed the programme to which he was to devote the remainder of his life. After some friendly references to the United States, which were greatly appreciated in that country, he continued:

But is it necessary, is it desirable, that our relation with Canada, with our great colonies in Australasia and South Africa, should follow the

same course, should result in a similar absolute independence? I am willing to submit to the charge of being a sentimentalist when I say that I will never willingly admit of any policy that will tend to weaken the ties between the different branches of the Anglo-Saxon race which form the British Empire and the vast dominion of the Queen.

We all feel a natural pride in the restless energy and dauntless courage which have created this great Empire. We feel a satisfaction in the constant evidence which is given us of the affectionate attachment of our fellow-subjects throughout the world to their old home. It seems to me that it would be unpatriotic to do anything which would discourage this sentiment—that it would be cowardly and unworthy to repudiate the obligations and responsibilities which the situation entails upon us. I would be willing to put it on the lowest possible grounds. Experience teaches us that trade follows the flag, and even in commercial questions sentiment is a powerful influence on the question of profit and loss. A great part of our population is dependent at the present moment upon the interchange of commodities with our colonial fellow-subjects, and it is the duty of every statesman to do all in his power to maintain and increase this commercial intercourse, and to foster the attachment upon which to a large extent it is founded. We have to watch for opportunities to strengthen the ties between our colonies and ourselves. There is a word which I am almost afraid to mention. I have been assured upon the highest authority that confederation is an empty dream, the fantastic vision of fools and fanatics.

“It cannot be. The vision is too fair

For creatures doomed to breathe terrestrial air.

Yet not for that shall sober reason frown
Upon that promise, nor that shape disown.
We know that only to high aims are due
Rich guerdons, and to them alone ensue."

I am well aware that up to the present time no practical scheme of federation has been submitted or suggested, but I do not think that such a scheme is impossible. There are two points which have to be prominently borne in mind. There is the question of commercial union and the question of union for defence. I have heard it argued that the colonies would be very foolish to allow themselves to become mixed up in our old-world policy, and to concern themselves with wars in which they can have no possible interest or advantage.

. . . I suppose the colonists read history; and if they do, they will know that every great war in which this country has been engaged since the great French war at the beginning of the century, and that every dispute which has seriously threatened our peace, has arisen out of the concerns and interests of one or other of the colonies or of the great dependency of India. Under these circumstances it appears to me that it may be at least as much to the interests of the colonies, as to those of the mother country, that we should seek and find a concerted system of defence.

The difficulty in the case of commercial union is, no doubt, much greater. It is no use to expect that our colonies will abandon their custom duties as their chief and principal source of revenue. It is hardly to be hoped that the protected interests, fostered by their system, will willingly surrender the privileges which they now enjoy. All we can do is to wait until proposals are made to us: to consider these proposals, when they come, with fairness

and impartiality; and to accept them if they do not involve the sacrificing of any important principle or of any interest vital to our population.

These sentiments may to-day sound trite on the lips of a British statesman, but if such is the case it is the measure of Mr. Chamberlain's success.

This was the first of a long series of speeches calling attention to the necessity for closer Imperial co-operation, but important as was this issue, and devoted as he was to it, Mr. Chamberlain did not therefore abandon his other projects. For example, he took up the question of Old Age Pensions and other forms of social and industrial insurance. "You see, gentlemen," he told a Midland audience in 1891, "I have not altogether forgotten the doctrine of ransom, though I am very willing to confess the word was not very well chosen. . . . The soldiers and the sailors are pensioned. Yes, but peace hath her victories as well as war; and the soldiers of industry, when they fall out of the ranks in the great conflict and competition in which they are continually engaged—they also have some claim to the consideration and gratitude of their country." He was not at that time able to persuade his Conservative colleagues to introduce the necessary legislation, but he had blazed the trail.

The statesmanlike qualities of which Mr. Chamberlain was every day giving fresh evidence did nothing to diminish the violence with which he was assailed by his opponents. He was probably more hated by that section of the population which was opposed to him than any British politician of modern times, with the possible exception of four—Lord Castlereagh, Mr. Disraeli, Mr. Parnell, and Mr. Lloyd George,

and no one since Mr. Canning had been so loathed by those who sat on the other side of the House. Of course, he invited attack, and sometimes he exposed his flank, as, for instance, when he said that he preferred the society of gentlemen to that of the Irish associates of the Gladstonians. This gave Mr. Labouchere his chance. "Labby" had never forgiven his old friend for preferring his principles to his prospects, and he let himself go. In October, 1891, he told the good people of Bury that he had not come down there to defend Judas, though there was something to be said for him. After betraying his Master he did not attend public meetings; he did not revile his associates; he did not sponge upon the priests, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees in order to be received into their society; he did not go swaggering about Judaea saying he had joined the gentlemen of Jerusalem. No: Judas was contrite; he was ashamed; he went out and hanged himself. In some things Judas compared advantageously with Mr. Chamberlain. As if this was not enough, "Labby" went on to refer to the ex-Radical donning the Tory livery, first putting on the coat and then pulling on the breeches, until he stood forward boldly and proudly in the character of a full-blown Tory flunkey.

When Lord Salisbury formed his third administration Mr. Chamberlain was very appropriately appointed Colonial Secretary. In 1886 the Liberal Unionists had refused to take office, as they felt that they could give the Government more effective support from outside, since in this way they would not lay themselves open to the reproach of having lost nothing by their opposition to Home Rule. Nine years later this argument was no longer operative, and Conservatives and

Liberal Unionists had worked so well together that there was no reason why they should not sit in the same Cabinet. This last, with a few exceptions, consisted of men who were safe rather than brilliant, but nearly all its members had established their reputation as sound administrators. The Prime Minister, who was also Foreign Secretary, had during the past decade acquired a prestige both at home and abroad which it is no exaggeration to say none of his successors has yet equalled. Many stories were told of his aloofness and frequent absence of mind, but he towered above his contemporaries like a colossus, and his strength was that of England. His nephew, Mr. A. J. Balfour, was Leader of the House of Commons, and few would have recognized in the dilettante of the "Fourth Party" the finished statesman who now sat on the Treasury Bench. Mr. Balfour's career was one of alternating success and failure, but there can be no doubt that during the years he served under his uncle, both as Chief Secretary for Ireland and as Leader of the House of Commons, he was at his best. The new Colonial Secretary claimed two qualifications for the office. "These qualifications are that, in the first place, I believe in the British Empire; and, in the second place, I believe in the British race. I believe that the British race is the greatest of governing races that the world has ever seen. I say that not merely as an empty boast, but as proved and evidenced by the success which we have had in administering the vast dominions which are connected with these small islands, and I believe, therefore, that there are no limits to its future." When he became Colonial Secretary he was close on sixty, and he had but another eleven years of political activity before him

until his health gave way. The record of what he did during this period is the history of his country, and all that can be attempted here is the briefest of summaries to explain what that country owes to him.

During the years that Mr. Chamberlain spent at the Colonial Office the problem of South Africa was his preoccupation, and to understand the difficulties which confronted him it is necessary to look back a little. Lord Beaconsfield had annexed the Transvaal, but the Boers were restless under British rule, and soon rose in revolt under one Paul Kruger; in 1881 they were victorious at Majuba, and Mr. Gladstone agreed, by the Pretoria Convention, to evacuate the country, while retaining British suzerainty, though it was only a few months before that Sir Garnet Wolseley had declared that until the sun no longer shone, and the Vaal ran backwards, the flag of England would float over the Transvaal. This retrocession of territory was hailed by the Boers as a magnanimous act, and coming on top of their victory in the field it gave them a feeling of infinite superiority: on the other hand the British in South Africa denounced it as a betrayal of loyal subjects, both white and coloured, who were handed over to the tender mercies of their enemies, the Boers. In this matter, Mr. Chamberlain followed Mr. Gladstone, though, as we have seen, he subsequently admitted that he had been wrong in taking this course.

The years which followed the Pretoria Convention saw an increasing number of British immigrants into the Transvaal, and the election of Kruger as President. He was one of the most narrow-minded of Boers, though sincere to the point of fanaticism, and while he invited the Outlanders into his country he treated

them very badly when they arrived. They were promised equal rights with the Dutch, but they got nothing of the sort, although they provided nine-tenths of the revenue. Neither their persons nor their possessions were safe; they were not allowed to carry arms to protect themselves or their women. When they demanded representation they were mocked and told to "come and fight for it". As if this was not enough, President Kruger sent filibustering expeditions into Bechuanaland, Zululand, and Swaziland, where he had no business to be at all; he conscripted Englishmen to fight the natives with whom they had no quarrel; and he closed the Vaal River drifts, over which merchandise was sent by road to Johannesburg, in order to make the Outlanders pay the exorbitant tariff exacted on his railway. Such was the situation which Mr. Chamberlain found when he arrived at the Colonial Office, and he was not the man to put up with it tamely. He took a strong line with President Kruger, who was not yet ready for war, and gave way. The drifts were reopened, but it was clear that further trouble was brewing. Unable to procure redress for themselves, aware of the strained relations existing with the Home Government, and smarting bitterly under the consciousness of their inferior position, the Outlanders were coming to the conclusion that something more drastic than constitutional agitation was required to redress the balance.

At this time the outstanding figure in South Africa was Mr. Cecil Rhodes, who occupied a number of very important positions. A man of vast wealth, which he had acquired by his own ability and initiative, he was Acting-Director of the Chartered Company that governed Mashonaland, chairman of the De Beer

mines at Kimberley, and Premier of Cape Colony. He owed his pre-eminence to the skill with which he had succeeded in obtaining the support, not only of the English, but of the more moderate Dutch; his political aim was the union of all South Africa under the British Crown, and this naturally made him an object of the gravest suspicion to President Kruger. Mr. Rhodes had a brother who was one of the leading Outlanders at Johannesburg, and through the latter he was kept informed of the intentions of the President's opponents. It is now beyond doubt that there was an understanding that when the moment arrived the reformers at Johannesburg would receive armed assistance from their sympathizers in Mashonaland. With this end in view, though ostensibly for other reasons, a small force of troops, police, and volunteers was collected at Pitsani, close to the Transvaal frontier, under the command of Dr. Jameson, the Administrator of Mashonaland. The plot, it must be remembered, was merely to depose President Kruger, not to seize the country for the British.

The conspirators soon proved themselves to be the sorriest of bunglers. The Outlanders in Johannesburg fell to disputing among themselves under what flag they were to fight, and postponed their rising until they had come to a decision. Mr. Rhodes agreed to the postponement, and warned Dr. Jameson accordingly, but the latter preferred to act on his own judgment. He had been provided with a letter, which he was to produce when occasion required it, alleging that the lives of the British women and children in Johannesburg were in danger, and summoning him to their immediate assistance. In spite of the postponement, Dr. Jameson sent a copy of this letter to

The Times, and crossed the frontier on the day originally fixed (30th December, 1895). He got as far as Krugersdorp, but instead of pushing on to Johannesburg he halted his men, and so gave the Boers time to surround him, after which he was compelled to surrender. The whole affair was most unfortunate, and the behaviour of Mr. Rhodes highly improper. Mr. Chamberlain took instant measures to repudiate Dr. Jameson, but both the Boers and the Opposition at home believed, or affected to believe, that the Colonial Secretary had been an accessory before the fact in the matter of the raid. This suspicion was intensified when one of the witnesses at the Committee of Inquiry said that "the Colonial Office was in it", and when Mr. Chamberlain, somewhat imprudently, declared that there was no stain on the personal honour of Mr. Rhodes. This unloosed all the old Liberal rancour against the Colonial Secretary. To quote Sir Wilfrid Lawson:

If Jameson makes a wicked raid,
And strikes a treacherous blow,
On searching records, I'm afraid
You'll find it worked by "Joe".

If bullying Kruger is the scheme,
At which we're never slow,
The wretched business, it would seem,
Is all arranged by "Joe".

And now, when making sugar dear
Appears to be the "go",
You read the Blue Books, and it's clear
The whole thing springs from "Joe".

If anyone does grievous wrong,
And who? you wish to know:
If you inquire, you'll find ere long
The author's always "Joe".

Nevertheless the Select Committee on the raid reported that "neither the Secretary of State for the Colonies nor any of the officials of the Colonial Office received any information which made them or should have made them or any of them aware of the plot during its development". Nothing could have been more explicit.

The Opposition of course took the line that President Kruger was a high-souled patriot whom a wicked British Government was plotting to ruin, and it must be admitted that the latter displayed no great skill in avoiding the appearance of evil. Yet there was little to be said for the Boer President or his methods. His treatment of the Outlanders was quite inconsistent with the republican principles which he professed, and there is no reasonable doubt that in 1893 he falsified the election figures which caused him to be re-elected President by a majority of 700 over General Joubert. Even Mr. W. T. Stead, assuredly no friend of the Colonial Secretary, wrote of President Kruger a year after the Jameson Raid: "He has spent nearly two millions over arms and munitions of war, and he is securing from the Rand laws which will enable him to gag the Press, to banish every Englishman whom he distrusts, and to confiscate to an indefinite extent the property of the gold-miners of the Rand." The purity of President Kruger's motives was not rendered any more apparent in England by the receipt of a telegram from the German Emperor congratulating him on the failure of the Jameson Raid.

PRESIDENT KRUGER



These events strengthened the position of President Kruger and weakened that of Mr. Chamberlain, for the latter could hardly warn the Transvaal of the consequences which might ensue if the claims of the Outlanders continued to be neglected without the suspicion of his complicity in the raid being deepened among the extremely thin-skinned Boers. Yet in 1896 he still felt sure that the problem might be solved "without danger to the independence of the Republic", but that until it was solved there was "no guarantee against future internal disturbances". Before the meeting of Parliament in February, 1896, he wrote an elaborate dispatch, setting out once more the claims of the British Government and the grievances of the Outlanders, and recommending a plan for the separate municipal government of Johannesburg if it was found impossible to give the Outlanders the vote. Unhappily this dispatch was communicated to the British Press before it reached President Kruger, and the old man felt that he had been deliberately insulted, although it contained the eminently friendly suggestion that he should come to London to talk matters over. After rebuking the Colonial Secretary for what he described as "the new diplomacy", the Boer declined to come to England unless he was allowed to reopen the whole question of independence, for even after Majuba, as has been shown, the Transvaal was held to be under British suzerainty.

Thereafter there was deadlock for a time, while the Boers prepared for war. President Kruger sent missions to Europe in order to gain the support of those Powers which were unfriendly to Great Britain, and he made a treaty with the Orange Free State by which the latter pledged itself to throw in its lot with

the Transvaal in the event of war. He also, as has been mentioned, spent vast sums on armaments, and intrigued with the Dutch in the Cape. In May, 1897, the somewhat unsatisfactory Sir Hercules Robinson was replaced as High Commissioner by Sir Alfred Milner. Before the latter went out to the scene of his labours a banquet was given in his honour, and Mr. Chamberlain availed himself of the opportunity to declare that Great Britain must always remain the paramount Power, and that it was useless for the Boers to cherish any dreams of foreign intervention on their behalf. This was a hint both to Berlin and to the Boers, but the latter, in the hope of raising the question at issue to the international plane, and so of troubling the waters for their own better fishing, persisted in demanding foreign arbitration. To this Mr. Chamberlain replied that in no circumstances would the British Government tolerate anything of the sort.

Meanwhile the lot of the Outlanders was going from bad to worse, and here it may be as well to remove a misconception which has grown up in the course of years. The agitation against President Kruger resulted from real hardship and oppression: that the latter was sometimes exaggerated, and that the agitation was fanned from without, cannot be denied, but the grievances had a solid foundation in fact. Nor were the Outlanders, as has been frequently asserted, a body of selfish and reckless speculators; on the contrary, for the most part they were men whose one desire was to be contented citizens of the Transvaal, and by their behaviour during the war they gave ample proof of the sterling qualities they possessed. The death of one Edgar, who was shot by a Boer

policeman in the presence of his wife, brought matters to a head. The grievances of the Outlanders were formulated in a petition to the Queen, which contained nearly 22,000 signatures, and begged for the intervention of the British Government. Sir Alfred Milner had by now reported to the effect that the existing situation could not be allowed to continue. All this decided the Colonial Secretary to intervene, and he determined to bring the strongest possible pressure to bear upon the President. After expressing a desire "to maintain cordial relations with the South African Republic", he urged that a meeting should be arranged "for the purpose of discussing the situation in a conciliatory spirit, in the hope of arriving at such an arrangement as Her Majesty's Government could accept and recommend to the Outlander population as a reasonable concession to their just demands".

On 31st May, discussion began at Bloemfontein between "Oom Paul" and Sir Alfred Milner. It is unnecessary to follow them in detail here, but the concluding passages of the High Commissioner's dispatch must be quoted in justification of Mr. Chamberlain's attitude:

The spectacle of thousands of British subjects kept permanently in the position of helots, constantly chaffing under undoubted grievances, and calling vainly to Her Majesty's Government for redress, does steadily undermine the influence and reputation of Great Britain and respect for the British Government within the Queen's dominions.

A certain section of the Press, not in the Transvaal only, preaches openly and constantly the doctrine of a Republic embracing all South Africa, and

supports it by menacing references to the armaments of the Transvaal, its alliance with the Orange Free State, and the active sympathy which in the case of war it would receive from a section of Her Majesty's subjects. I regret to say that this doctrine, supported as it is by a ceaseless stream of malignant lies about the intentions of the British Government, is producing a great effect upon a large number of our Dutch fellow-colonists. Language is frequently used which seems to imply that the Dutch have some superior right even in this colony to their fellow-citizens of British birth. Thousands of men peaceably disposed, and, if let alone, perfectly satisfied with their position as British subjects, are being drawn into disaffection, and there is a corresponding exasperation on the side of the British.

I can see nothing which will put a stop to this mischievous propaganda but some striking proof of the intention of Her Majesty's Government not to be ousted from its position in South Africa. And the best proof alike of its power and its justice would be to obtain for the Uitlanders in the Transvaal a fair share in the government of the country which owes everything to their exertions. It could be made perfectly clear that our action was not directed against the existence of the Republic. We should be only demanding the re-establishment of rights which now exist in the Orange Free State, and which existed in the Transvaal itself at the time of, and long after, the withdrawal of British sovereignty. It would be no selfish demand, as other Uitlanders besides those of British birth would benefit by it. It is asking for nothing from others which we do not give ourselves. And it would certainly go to the root of the political unrest in South Africa, and though temporarily it might

aggravate, it would ultimately extinguish, the race feud which is the great bane of the country.

Uncultured and ignorant though President Kruger was, he displayed in negotiation a subtlety which would not have disgraced the most slippery of Oriental potentates. He had given way once, over the drifts, and Mr. Chamberlain assumed he would do so again. "The cardinal and essential fact," said the Colonial Secretary, "is supremacy, predominancy, paramountcy—call it what you will. I do not care a brass button which of these words you choose—you may call it 'Abracadabra' if you like, provided you have the substance." This was just what the Boers would not admit. It was by no means impossible to obtain concessions from Oom Paul which appeared satisfactory, but it was quite another thing to get any that really were satisfactory when examined in the light of the grievances they were to remove; it was still more difficult to obtain guarantees, without which the concessions would be useless. The President was, in fact, playing for time to complete his armaments, and his conduct of negotiations was inspired with the desire to place the onus of aggression upon Great Britain in the eyes of the world, a task in which he succeeded only too well. For example, he offered a five years' franchise, which was what England had been demanding, but only on conditions which virtually abolished British suzerainty and established the complete independence of the Transvaal. These conditions were, of course, declined, and the Boer offer was withdrawn. Mr. Chamberlain took the President to task for his procrastinating diplomacy. "He dribbles out reforms like water from a squeezed sponge, and he either accompanies his offers with conditions which he knows

to be impossible, or he refuses to allow us to make a satisfactory investigation of the nature and character of those reforms." The Colonial Secretary warned Oom Paul that "the sands are running down in the glass". The Government, in more official language, declared itself "obliged to consider the situation afresh", and announced that it would formulate its own proposals for a final settlement.

At the beginning of October, 1899, the storm burst. The situation had become so threatening that as a measure of precaution the British troops in South Africa had been reinforced, and this alarmed the Boers. They thereupon sent an ultimatum demanding that all the troops on the borders of the Transvaal should be instantly withdrawn, that all reinforcements which had arrived since June should be removed, and that those on the high seas should not be allowed to land. If the reply, which was to be given within forty-eight hours, was not favourable "the Transvaal Government would be compelled to regard the action of Her Majesty's Government as a formal declaration of war". The ultimatum, needless to say, was rejected, and on 12th October the Boer commandos crossed the frontier.

It has been necessary to record in some detail the events which led up to the South African War because they have so often been distorted by the critics of Mr. Chamberlain. In the first place it has been alleged that he was hand-in-glove with Mr. Rhodes, and that between them they organized the Jameson Raid. The fact is that the two men were by no means on good terms, and that far from having organized the raid the Colonial Secretary knew nothing about it until it had taken place. He was aware, like everybody else,

that a revolution might break out at any moment in Johannesburg, and, as was his duty, he made the necessary arrangements to protect British lives and property in that event, but of any idea of using Dr. Jameson's force to precipitate such a movement he was wholly innocent. Then he is accused of working to bring on the war for the purpose of annexing the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, but, apart from the actual record of the negotiations, surely the best answer to this charge is that if Mr. Chamberlain and his colleagues wanted war they would have made some more effective preparation for it than subsequent events proved to have been the case. The Opposition even stooped so low as to say that the Colonial Secretary and his relatives had made money out of war contracts, and these attacks were so contrived that Mr. Chamberlain was advised that he had no legal remedy, but his brother and his younger son, the present Prime Minister, took the matter into court and obtained damages. On the whole issue perhaps the Colonial Secretary may be allowed to speak for himself:

When I have been in doubt as to President Kruger's intentions I have given him the benefit of the doubt. I am taunted with having spoken of his magnanimity. I desired to believe him magnanimous. Some great man, Goethe, I think, said that if you wish a man to be what you want him to be you must express your belief that he is so. I convinced myself. I satisfied myself, that there were indications of magnanimity which I rejoiced to acknowledge. Well, sir, I may have erred. You may ridicule my foresight; you may condemn my moderation; but you cannot deny that all this

points to my intimate and anxious desire for that peaceful settlement which we have failed to secure.

While the war was still in progress Mr. Chamberlain said that "as soon as it is safe and possible, it will be the desire of Her Majesty's Government to introduce these states into the great circle of self-governing colonies"; and when hostilities were terminated he went out to South Africa to study the situation for himself. It was a new departure, for British statesmen had, with one or two exceptions such as Mr. Walter Long, been content to rely upon others for their information regarding the Empire overseas. "I am come," said Mr. Chamberlain, on landing in Natal, "to express on behalf of the King and his Government, and the people of the motherland, their sympathy with their kinsmen across the seas; their desire to understand them better, and their hope for a closer and more personal intercourse." He felt sure that it was information gained on the spot which would help him to solve the questions that were so pressing. "They are the same questions with which we have long been familiar at home; but, somehow or other, in the atmosphere of London they appear to be different from what they are in the atmosphere of South Africa." Some idea of the extent of Mr. Chamberlain's tour can be gathered from the fact that he and his wife left England in November, 1902, and did not return until the following March, when they had travelled over 16,000 miles.

Everywhere he went he preached conciliation between British and Boers, but he made it quite clear that the Government meant to be firm as well as conciliatory. When he got to Bloemfontein he received

the Hertzog petition which charged Great Britain with breach of faith, and which was, in effect, merely an attempt to have the terms of peace modified in favour of the vanquished. Mr. Chamberlain administered a severe rebuke to the petitioners, and told them that it was useless to make further concessions to those who expressed no gratitude for what they had already received, and who only regarded concessions as a ground for further demands. When he left to return home, he confessed himself an incurable optimist. "I leave South Africa with the firm conviction that Providence, which out of evil still brings forth good, will evolve some compensation for the suffering and misery that a great war entails. I leave more than ever convinced that the natural forces which are drawing you together are more potent than those evil influences which would tend to separate you." After the lapse of a generation these words have not, one hopes, lost their significance.

If it was not given to Mr. Chamberlain to put the finishing touches to the Union of South Africa, in another part of the Empire, namely Australia, he helped to give its final form to the Constitution, though the creation of the Commonwealth was mostly the work of the colonial statesmen themselves. For a good many years attempts had been made to bring about a federation of the Australian colonies, and this project was encouraged by the Colonial Office. The mutual jealousies of the various colonies made it a matter of considerable difficulty to bring them to any common ground of union, and more obstacles arose when the relations of the proposed federation with Great Britain came to be discussed. Mr. Chamberlain took advantage of the Diamond Jubilee to bring the

Australian Prime Ministers together to discuss the question, and he put his views before them. In what he said Tariff Reform was latent, if not yet potent. He indicated the possibility of a common tariff for the whole Empire, the advisability of some central representative council, and the probable necessity for some devaluation of Imperial responsibilities. At the same time he gave the Prime Ministers concerned to understand that the work was theirs and not his, and that it lay with them to bring about their own federation and to smooth out the inter-colonial difficulties; when that was done the British Government would be ready to lend a sympathetic ear to any request for closer union.

In the years that followed the Australian statesmen took the Colonial Secretary's advice, and hammered out a scheme of federation. Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania voted for it by substantial majorities, but several concessions had to be made to New South Wales before she, too, could be persuaded to ratify. That left only Queensland and Western Australia, but the former came into line after securing a special amendment which enabled her to divide her huge geographical area into districts for senatorial elections. Mr. Chamberlain then convened a conference in London not only of the five accepting colonies, but also of West Australia and New Zealand. The situation of the former was peculiar: she was isolated from the other colonies by enormous distances, no railway crossed her, and it took as long to get from Perth to Sydney as from Liverpool to New York. The colony, too, was thinly populated, and was entirely dependent upon the tariff for revenue, so as the price of her consent to federation West Australia

demanding freedom to collect its own tariff for five years without submitting to the sliding scale provided for in the new constitution. The other states would not agree to this, and there appeared every likelihood of a deadlock, until the gold-mining districts in the Eastern section of West Australia began to clamour for separation on the ground that they were under-represented and over-taxed. Mr. Chamberlain did not support this movement, but he used it as a talking-point with the Perth Government, which eventually gave way: a referendum was held in West Australia, and the majority voted for federation. In January, 1901, the Commonwealth of Australia became an accomplished fact.

This settlement was typical of the way the Colonial Secretary handled the business of his Department. However truculent he might appear on the platform he never attempted to hustle colonial statesmen, or to force upon them any cut and dried scheme of his own. He wanted to work with them, not through them. Typical also was his appeal to Australian sentiment in his request to the Queen, readily granted, to allow the Duke and Duchess of York to open the first Parliament of the new Commonwealth.

While Mr. Chamberlain was at the Colonial Office he had necessarily, in the circumstances of the time, much to do with foreign policy. The Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, was also Foreign Secretary, but he was often away owing to age and ill-health, and he delegated much of his work to Mr. Balfour, so that the relations of Great Britain with the rest of the world were directed by a triumvirate. The Colonial Secretary had never been a believer in that doctrine of "splendid isolation", which was so popular in the

latter part of the nineteenth century, and while he was still a member of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet, he had nailed his colours to the mast:

I can say for myself that I have always protested in the strongest terms against the policy of non-intervention or peace at any price, which I have believed to be an unworthy and ignoble doctrine for any great nation to hold. I have always thought that a great nation like an individual had duties and responsibilities to its neighbours, and that it could not wrap itself up in a policy of selfish isolation and say that nothing concerned it unless its material interests were directly attacked.

Mr. Chamberlain had not forgotten his first meeting with Mr. Bright.

Events now seemed to prove his contention, and to give it added point, for when the Jameson Raid took place Great Britain had not a friend in the world. The Colonial Secretary, with the full approval of Lord Salisbury, worked hard for a close understanding with the United States and Germany. President Cleveland's uncompromising attitude over Venezuela had for a brief space seemed to threaten war between the two Anglo-Saxon Powers, and that this did not take place was very largely due to Mr. Chamberlain, who went to America himself to negotiate. As regards Germany, no man ever worked so hard to remove the obstacles in the path of friendship between two countries, but his efforts were frustrated in Berlin, chiefly by the Emperor himself. Yet in spite of repeated rebuffs it was some years before he abandoned his goal, and at the Liberal Unionist Conference in 1900 he aroused a good deal of adverse, if some favourable, comment by an allusion to the

desirability of an alliance between Great Britain, Germany, and the United States. Not that he was ever prepared to truckle to a foreigner. Mention has already been made of his retort to Prince von Bülow, and when the French Press published vile caricatures of the Queen he said these attacks "will have serious consequences if our neighbours do not mend their manners".

It was at this moment, when Mr. Chamberlain's prestige was at its height, that he resigned office to advocate another "unauthorized programme", namely Tariff Reform. Alike in the Cabinet, on the platform, and in the House of Commons he was, at sixty-seven, at the very top of his form. His retorts could be more devastating than those of any leader of modern times, save possibly the late Lord Birkenhead. Once, during the South African War, he was interrupted by Mr. Dillon, who called out that a Boer commander who had advised his men to surrender was a traitor. "Ah," said Mr. Chamberlain quietly, "the honourable gentleman is a judge of traitors." In his early days he was at a public meeting making fun of the Conservative working-man, and saying that he did not believe such a thing existed. At this point one of the audience rose and shouted out: "I'll satisfy yer curiosity; I'm a Conservative working-man, have been all my life, and I'll die one." This would have nonplussed ninety-nine speakers out of a hundred, but not Mr. Chamberlain. He adjusted his eyeglass, looked the interrupter up and down, and then exclaimed: "Wonder of wonders! Often talked of, but never before seen! Here he is in the flesh. Seize him, gentlemen, seize him, and we'll have him in the museum!"

The force of Mr. Chamberlain's personality was

terrific. An eye-witness gives a vivid account of a meeting Mr. Chamberlain addressed in the Black Country during the height of the Home Rule controversy. "There was a rowdy element in the meeting come to make a disturbance. For the first forty minutes he was constantly interrupted. Then he turned his attention to those men; he simply talked to them for twenty minutes. For the last forty minutes he had absolute silence, and at the end the meeting cheered him like mad. I never saw anything like it—it was power, pure and simple, sheer power." In his Rectorial address at Glasgow in 1897 he told his audience what he meant by leadership: "It is the business of a leader to lead; it is the business of a leader to educate his party, but to do so sympathetically, not to do it with contempt shown on every line of his intelligent countenance. That is not the way either to convince or to carry an audience with you."

On 18th September, 1903, Mr. Chamberlain resigned the Colonial Secretaryship, not because of any difference with Mr. Balfour (who had succeeded Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister in the previous year), but because as a private individual he could urge on the country a programme in a way impossible for a Minister. As it happened the leading Free Traders also left the Government, and in the re-shuffle of posts Mr. Austen Chamberlain became Chancellor of the Exchequer. Four days after his resignation, Mr. Chamberlain explained his attitude in a letter to Mr. Walter Long:

I am very sorry to sever our official relations, but I am convinced that the decision come to by Balfour and myself is the wisest in the interests of the Party, and will tend to the ultimate success of



FIDGETY JOE.

PAU (D-RE OF D-RE-RE-RE).
LET ME SEE IF JOSEPH CAN
BE A LITTLE GENTLEMAN;

MADAM (ALTHOUGH PAU).
LET ME SEE IF HE IS ABLE
TO SIT STILL FOR ONCE AT TABLE.

Sketchmaster adapted.

Punch, June 24, 1903

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our cause. I hope that I may have made a bridge across which the Free Fooders may return to their allegiance. . . . I am very glad that Austen has his chance. I believe he will be worthy of it. Meanwhile even my opponents cannot represent me as hostile to a government in which he is a prominent man. You will not, therefore, find me denouncing "my right Hon. friend" from the benches below the gangway.

Indeed, Mr. Chamberlain did everything in his power to avoid a quarrel with those Conservatives and Liberal Unionists who disagreed with his new policy. "It is my intention," he wrote to the late Sir Charles Petrie at this time, "in the ensuing discussion to avoid anything which might appear to constitute a personal controversy between myself and the friends who differ from me."

In a speech at the Hotel Cecil the ex-Colonial Secretary explained how he had become convinced of the necessity of Protection:

I must confess for myself that it was many years after I entered political life before I in any way questioned the prevailing orthodoxy, or doubted that even free imports were the best policy for this country. . . . I date my own doubts upon this question from the time when, in the early eighties, I was called upon, as President of the Board of Trade, in Mr. Gladstone's Government, to defend free imports against the assaults made by the Fair Traders. . . . At that time my views were not changed; but they were shaken, and since then every succeeding year has confirmed my doubts, and made it more evident to me that the course we have pursued was not the course which the country

was invited to adopt (by Cobden) and that the system which has been substituted for it is open to grave objection and has not produced the results which we had a right to expect. . . . When, nine years ago, I took up my position at the Colonial Office, then indeed a new aspect of the question was forced upon me—a new aspect and a new obligation. . . . I found that there were questions in connection with our colonies which in Mr. Cobden's time were never raised. . . . The very idea of Empire was distasteful, and the possibility of a union of the Empire seemed to them only a vain imagination.

We are fortunately under no necessity here of raking over the cold ashes of the Tariff Reform controversy. The man-in-the-street reacted to Mr. Chamberlain's proposals in the usual way. First of all he rejected them out of hand at the General Election of 1906: then he (or some of him) slowly came round to the view that there might be something in them, which was the stage he had reached by the General Election of 1923; and finally he regarded them as inevitable at the General Election of 1931. To-day he wonders why he ever adopted Free Trade, and is uncertain whether Cobden was a man or a horse. Yet it took nearly a generation, during which there was one of the greatest wars, and one of the greatest slumps in history, to convince him. Mr. Chamberlain wrought many surprises in British politics, and not the least remarkable was to convert the Conservatives into reformers, and Liberals and Socialists into supporters of the *status quo*, where tariffs were concerned. Why what was essentially a matter of expediency should have been discussed as if a great question of principle were involved,

it is impossible to see, but such was only too often the case. The opponents of Tariff Reform dragged every sort of red herring across the trail, and this, as was intended, confused the issue for the ordinary elector. One rather amusing instance of this will suffice. I was standing for a West Country constituency at the General Election of 1923, and had been explaining at an open-air meeting that one of the advantages of a tariff would be that the foreign manufacturer would open factories in this country, thus giving employment to British workpeople. The district was Liberal, and the argument was new, but the audience was most attentive, with the exception of one old labourer who would persist in interjecting the remark: "They'll bring Chinamen." When the meeting was over, I asked him how he arrived at such a surprising conclusion, and after some conversation discovered that the last mention he had heard of Tariff Reform was at the General Election of 1906, when the Liberals raised the cry of "Chinese Slavery", and the old man thought that the two must be in some way connected.

There were of necessity many modifications in Mr. Chamberlain's scheme before Protection was finally adopted by an administration in which his younger son was Chancellor of the Exchequer, but this does not alter the fact that the change in the British tariff system is due to Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. He pointed out the path which others have followed until, to parody Disraeli's verdict on Protection, Free Trade is not only dead but damned, that is to say until the rest of the world shows some inclination to appreciate its merits. In one respect Mr. Chamberlain deceived himself—he found it impossible to carry on his campaign without coming to loggerheads with

his old colleagues, not excluding the Prime Minister himself. Mr. Balfour had many virtues, but the gift of leadership was not among them. The ex-Colonial Secretary soon forced the tariff issue to the front, but no one knew where Mr. Balfour stood on it, and there seemed to the ordinary voter to be much truth in the lines which Sir Wilfrid Lawson put into his mouth:

I'm not for Free Trade, and I'm not for Protec-
tion;
I approve of them both, and to both have
objection.

In going through life, I continually find
It's a terrible business to make up one's mind.

And it's always the best in political fray
To take up the line of the Vicar of Bray.

So, in spite of all comments, reproach and
predictions,
I firmly adhere to Unsettled Convictions.

Matters came to a head in the last months of 1905, when the Prime Minister was considering an appeal to the country. At the annual Conference of National Unionist and Conservative Associations at Newcastle-on-Tyne on 14th November, Mr. Balfour appealed for unity, and claimed that his fiscal policy should serve as a rallying-point for all supporters of the Government. Nevertheless, he does not seem to have had much confidence in the success of his appeal, for he went to Windsor a few days later and told the King that he wanted to resign. He was correct in his surmise, for a week after the Prime Minister had spoken

at Newcastle he was sharply criticized by Mr. Chamberlain at the annual meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council at Bristol on the ground that he had evaded all the really important issues. Mr. Chamberlain further declared that the majority of the Government's supporters agreed with him, and he announced active hostilities against the minority which either favoured Free Trade, like the Duke of Devonshire, or Preference without retaliation, like the Prime Minister himself. This precipitated a crisis, and Mr. Balfour tendered his resignation to the King. At the General Election which ensued the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists suffered a disaster unparalleled since the defeat of Fox and North in 1784, Mr. Balfour lost his own seat, and of the larger centres of population Birmingham alone rose above the waters of the Liberal flood.

The final result of the election was a net loss to the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists of 215 seats, and the party returned to the House of Commons 157 strong to face a Liberal, Labour, and Nationalist combination of 513. Naturally there were bitter recriminations, and the situation was not rendered any easier by the fact that someone would have to be selected as temporary Leader of the Opposition until Mr. Balfour found a seat. A good many Conservatives would have liked to go even further, and take advantage of the opportunity to get rid of the ex-Premier for good. From the beginning Mr. Chamberlain made it clear that if there was to be a vacancy he was not a candidate for it, and he wrote to Mr. Long:

. . . Nothing would induce me to take the leadership in his place, and I have told all my friends, some of whom are no doubt almost as indiscreet as

his supporters, that it is no use suggesting me for a position which would be entirely opposed to my personal sentiments, and must inevitably lead to disaster. The leader of a party mainly composed of Conservatives ought to be, and I think must be, a Conservative. . . . I am told, though I do not think the matter was mentioned when I saw Balfour, that he is as much opposed to the suggestion of a third leadership (which would be quite acceptable to me) as he is to a definite platform or a union of organizations. In fact he is *non possumus* everywhere, and I confess I do not see my way out of the difficulty in which we are placed.

A temporary solution was reached by which Mr. Chamberlain led the Opposition until Mr. Balfour's re-election, with Mr. Long as his deputy. What might have happened had the strained relationships between Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain continued it is impossible to say, for shortly after his seventieth birthday the latter was struck down by illness. At first it was believed that he would recover, but these hopes gradually faded, and for the rest of his life he was a helpless invalid. His constituency of West Birmingham with touching loyalty returned him to Parliament at the two General Elections of 1910, but never again was he to address that House where he had enjoyed so many and such complete triumphs. He was able with great difficulty to take the oath, but that was all. For nearly eight years he lived on, following the course of politics very closely, as his elder son's letters to him clearly prove, but unable to exercise any direct influence himself. "His passionate interest," Sir Austen tells us, "in the causes for which he fought continued till his last hours. I saw him on

the morning of the day on which he died. He questioned me about some debate a day or two before. I spoke of a speech of Asquith's, and he asked what I had replied. 'Quite right,' he said, when I told him, and added as I left his room: 'Somebody has got to give way, but I don't see why it should be always us.' These words, so characteristic of his dauntless spirit, were the last he spoke to me." On 2nd July, 1914, Mr. Chamberlain died.

Enough has already been said in these pages to show what manner of man was he who founded the Chamberlain tradition in British politics. During his lifetime he was at one time or another accused of every crime which can be laid to the charge of a statesman, and he both had his weaknesses and he made his mistakes. Yet in retrospect the greatness of the man seems hardly affected by such considerations. It was not only what he did that entitles him to a place among the most famous of his fellow-countrymen, but also the lead he gave to those who came after him. He made the ordinary British elector aware that he was the citizen of an empire on which the sun never set, and he also taught him that if his country was to maintain its rightful place in the world every man, woman, and child in it must have a fair deal. If ever the proud epitaph, *Imperium et Libertas*, was deserved by a mortal, that mortal was Joseph Chamberlain.

III

AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN



SIR AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN

[Photo : Lenare

CHAPTER IV

HIS FATHER'S SON

The career of Sir Austen Chamberlain falls into two parts, divided by the resignation of Mr. Lloyd George's administration, in which he was Lord Privy Seal, in 1922. During the first of these periods he was primarily, one might almost say exclusively, concerned with domestic and Imperial problems, whereas during the second it was the international situation that was his pre-occupation. Indeed, it appears to be the destiny of the Chamberlains to be sooner or later called from the field of home, into that of foreign, politics. It was the fate of Joseph Chamberlain to have to negotiate with Germany at a particularly difficult juncture; his elder son had sat in the House of Commons for over thirty years, and had filled some of the most important offices under the Crown, before he became Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, but it is for his work in this latter capacity that his name will go down to history; and now his younger son, become Prime Minister, finds his energies increasingly absorbed by the complexities of a situation more difficult than either of the other two members of his family ever knew.

Joseph Austen Chamberlain was born in 1863, and his mother died at his birth. We have already seen how shaken the widower was by this blow, but it was not until many years later that the boy realized what the loss had meant to his father. One evening soon

after Mr. Joseph Chamberlain had become engaged to Miss Endicott he began to talk to Austen about the latter's mother, and the young man observed: "Do you know, Sir, that this is the first time that you have ever spoken to me about my mother?" "Yes," was the reply, "I know. Until happiness came again into my life, I did not dare to—and even now I can't do it without the tears coming into my eyes." Another occasion may best be related in his son's own words. "It was one day in my 'teens that I spoke critically to him of a friend of his, left early a widower with an only child. 'He doesn't seem to care much for the boy,' I said, 'or to see much of him,' and my father, quick as always in a friend's defence, blurted out before he saw the implication of what he was saying, 'You must remember that his mother died when the boy was born,' and in a flash I saw for the first time, what he had so carefully concealed from me, that in my earliest years I had been to him the living embodiment of the first tragedy of his life."

The motherless boy and his sister were first placed in the care of his maternal aunt, and then when his father married again it was his stepmother who looked after them; after her death it was another aunt who did so. In spite of so many changes the children had nothing of which to complain, quite the reverse in fact, and their memories of these days were always the happiest. From his earlier days the elder boy's career was marked off from that of his brother and his father. They reached Parliament through business and local government, but he was trained to be a statesman from the beginning. It was the younger Pitt over again. Not since Chatham had there been a father so intent on the political upbringing of his son. "We

never knew your father," an Irish member said to Mr. Austen Chamberlain in the troublous times of the Second Home Rule Bill, "until we saw him with you. I can only say I wish that my son's relations with me were like yours with your father." In later years, when Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was incapacitated by illness, the son wrote a daily commentary on men and events. Much of this he published not long before his own death under the title of *Politics from Inside*. The book is not only a mine of information on the period with which it deals, but it shows a family as united as any in the British Isles. It only remains to add that when, in 1906, Mr. Austen Chamberlain married Miss Ivy Dundas, he created a household of his own which was to be as happy as that from which he had sprung.

As was to be the case with his younger brother, he was sent to Rugby, but from there he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, whereas Neville went to Birmingham University.

In the annals of the Political Society it is recorded that in 1884 "Mr. Austen Chamberlain read a short but practical paper on the Russian action in relation to the Irish Land question". At various times he declared that a single Chamber system was desirable, that Cobden was "a statesman of a high order", and that it was not desirable that "the United Kingdom should remain the centre of a great Empire", but he held even then that "an Irish Parliament would be a rebel Parliament".

In later years, I sometimes fancy, Mr. Austen Chamberlain rather regretted that he had not had any business experience, but in the eighties and nineties of last century no one realized that the day would come when ex-Cabinet ministers would be driven to the

City to repair fortunes shattered in the service of the State. As befitted a future Foreign Secretary, he was sent to France for nine months after he came down from Cambridge, and it was then that he developed the love of that country which was to influence him so greatly for the rest of his life. In Paris he studied at the *Ecole des Sciences Politiques*, where he attended the lectures of all the leading *savants* of the day. His father, often in the company of Sir Charles Dilke, had also been in France a great deal, and his friends naturally made the young man at home among them. Among these was M. Clemenceau. During the Peace negotiations Mr. Chamberlain was asked by his hostess one evening if he had met M. Clemenceau and M. Ribot. He replied that he had known them for thirty-five years: "M. Ribot lectured me on the French Constitution, and M. Clemenceau introduced me to the *première danseuse* of the Opera."

It is always easy to exaggerate the effect of a young man's impressions upon his later career. The younger Pitt visited France at about the same age as Austen Chamberlain, but because he complained that at Rheims he could not get any wine fit to drink, it would be absurd to assume that to this is due the long rivalry between France and England which led through Trafalgar to Waterloo. Yet Mr. Chamberlain's residence in France undoubtedly left its mark on him. He wrote of it: "What a varied and interesting society it was among whom I spent these months; how much was taught me; what new horizons it opened out to my eager eyes; above all, what kindness was showered upon me." The memory of all this never faded, and whenever he could Austen Chamberlain renewed his acquaintance with the

country where he had been so happy. Unfortunately he did not mix as freely in Parisian society as might have been the case, for the doors of the Right were shut to the son of the man who at that very moment was preaching the "unauthorized programme" from the platforms of the United Kingdom. It was a pity, because it meant that in years to come the weight of British support seemed, in the eyes of many Frenchmen, to be behind the Left, and that, in its turn, made the latter's opponents look elsewhere. So does fate make political sport even with a young man's friendships.

It is said that every educated man is at heart either a Roman or a Greek, and there are many arguments to be adduced in support of the theory. In modern times Englishmen seem inclined to fall into one of two categories, that is to say there is something they would find it very hard to define which pre-disposes them in favour either of France or of Germany. Sir Austen Chamberlain was from the beginning in the former camp. In February, 1887, he went to Germany for twelve months, and he never re-visited the country, although he had arranged to do so the summer that the war began. The Berlin which he knew was the old unsophisticated city of the Emperor Wilhelm I, and Prince Bismarck was still the power behind the throne. Mr. Chamberlain dined with the Chancellor one night at his house, sitting at dinner between his daughter "and the great man, or one of the great man's dogs I should say, whom he kept one on each side of him and stuffed with everything". Perhaps his distaste for Germany was in some measure due to his attendance at Trietschke's lectures. A letter which he wrote at this time well expresses the opinion which he had formed:

Trietschke has opened to me a new side of the German character—a narrow-minded, proud, intolerant Prussian chauvinism. And the worst of it is that he is forming a school. If you continuously preach to the youth of a country that they stand on a higher step of the creation to all other nations, they are only too ready to believe it, and the lecturer who descends to this will be popular and draw big audiences. But it's very dangerous. I fear my generation of Germans, and those a little younger will be far more high-handed, and will presume far more on the victories of '66 and '70 than those who won them.

When Austen Chamberlain came home from Germany the first step his father took was to find him a constituency, and he was duly adopted as prospective candidate for the Border Burghs. He nursed the seat for four years, when something more attractive, and nearer Birmingham, offered itself, namely East Worcestershire, where the previous member had been expelled from the House after trial and conviction for breach of trust. Mr. Chamberlain consented to stand as a Liberal Unionist, but when it became known that he shared his father's views on Disestablishment some of the Conservatives threatened to run a man of their own. The young candidate refused to barter his opinions for votes, and for a time it appeared as if a split was inevitable, but more moderate counsels prevailed. On 30th March, 1892, Mr. Chamberlain was returned unopposed, and he walked up the floor between his father and an uncle.

That Parliament was dissolved shortly afterwards, and the new member did not make his maiden speech until after the ensuing General Election. He was not,

like Fox, one who developed his oratorical powers by speaking on all and every occasion, and it was not until April, 1893, that Mr. Gladstone is found writing to the Queen: "A little later in the evening Mr. Austen Chamberlain, son of Mr. Chamberlain, took part for the first time in the debates of the House. He delivered one of the best speeches which has been made against the Bill (i.e. the Second Home Rule Bill), and exhibited himself as a person of whom high political anticipations may reasonably be entertained." The Prime Minister had given him a friendly cheer, and a day or two after he showed how great a gentleman he was by observing: "I will not embark on any eulogy of the speech: I will endeavour in a few words to sum up what I desire to say of it. It was a speech that must have been dear and refreshing to a father's heart." Contemporaries testify that Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was never so moved in public as on this occasion.

The Liberal Unionists were returned forty-seven strong at the General Election of 1892, and Mr. Austen Chamberlain was appointed their junior Whip. Of that Parliament he wrote in after years:

Of all the Parliaments in which I have sat . . . that of 1892-5 was by far the most exciting. Passion was at fever heat from the very first, parties were very evenly divided, the Government majority was small, and the Opposition was determined to use its rights to the uttermost and to give no quarter. When the House met for business in January, 1893, the debate on the Address was only concluded by the unusual expedient of a Saturday sitting; that on the introduction (now a purely formal stage) of the Home Rule Bill took

five days, and the debate on the second reading lasted no fewer than twelve. The later proceedings were in proportion, and the Session itself lasted till within a day or two of the Easter of the following year. "Time," said Lord Randolph Churchill, "is the life-blood of a Government," and the Opposition had decided to bleed the Government to death.

It was an admirable training, and was to make Mr. Austen Chamberlain the greatest Parliamentarian of his day, and yet, even when the whole civilized world was hanging on his words, he could never get up to speak without an uncomfortable feeling in the pit of his stomach.

Generally he acted as A.D.C. to his father, and of his work in this capacity one instance will suffice. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain had charged Mr. Dillon with direct incitement to violence in a speech, but when challenged to substantiate the allegation he had not provided himself with the particulars of time and place. "I will send the honourable gentleman the reference," he said. "I will reply when the Right Honourable gentleman can produce it," replied Mr. Dillon, but when this had been done he still remained silent, so Mr. Chamberlain raised the matter again a few days later. The Irishman thereupon delivered what a later age would have termed a "sob-stuff" speech, and said that he had made the remarks in question at a meeting just after the police had shed the blood of innocent people at Mitchelstown, that he was under the emotions roused by this scene, and that in the circumstances it was not fair to taunt him with a few rash words. "Austen," whispered his father, "get me the date of Mitchelstown. I know he's lying." The younger man did as he was bid, but before

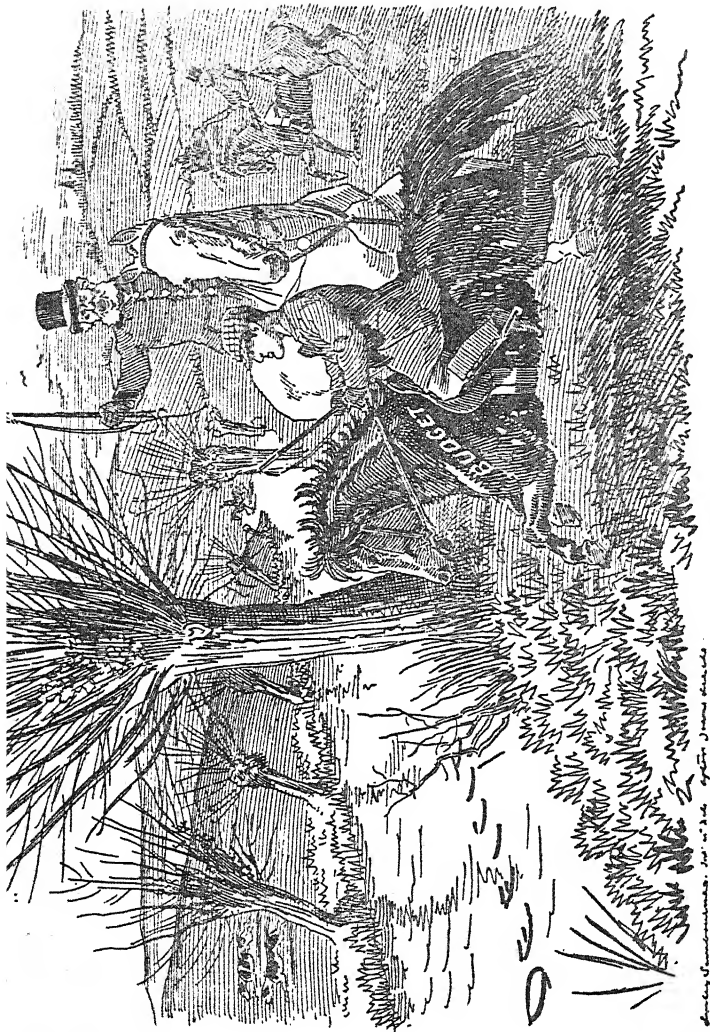
he had found the necessary information someone else had supplied it, and Mr. Chamberlain was able to prove that the Mitchelstown riot had taken place nine months after Mr. Dillon had spoken. "The House rang with cheers; Dillon's face, always pale, went white; for once the Irish were silenced."

When the Conservatives came back to office in 1895, Mr. Austen Chamberlain was made a Civil Lord of the Admiralty, a post which he held until 1900 when he became Financial Secretary to the Treasury; as usual, that soon led to high office, in his case the Postmaster-Generalship, which he filled for a year before becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer, when both his father and the Free Traders left Mr. Balfour's Cabinet.

The peculiar circumstances in which Mr. Austen Chamberlain became Chancellor of the Exchequer have been discussed in an earlier chapter. His appointment was very largely made in order that the breach between his father and the Prime Minister should not be widened unnecessarily. Mrs. Dugdale stresses this point in her biography of her uncle: "The continued co-operation in the Government of the son, who entirely shared his father's fiscal creed, was a token that there was in truth no cleavage on the matter of principle. . . . But Balfour and Chamberlain had been bred to party politics. They knew too well the strength of the forces that would tend to drive them apart. Therefore, the link to be forged through Mr. Austen Chamberlain was welcome on every personal and public ground." However this may be the new Chancellor found Mr. Balfour by no means easy to understand, and if he acted as a link, it was as one that often had to stand a very severe strain.

After Lord Balfour was dead Sir Austen wrote of him: "Things which seemed important to him often appeared of little consequence to his followers, and to his opponents (as for instance in the Tariff controversy) a mere splitting of hairs, a quibble unworthy of the ingenuity with which he sustained it and of the serious issues at stake. He was not content to make a broad statement of his views without at the same time giving expression to all the qualifications which to his mind he required." Perhaps there was in his character too much of those "damned Scotch metaphysics" to which George III had so strong an objection. He could not make himself intelligible to the ordinary man, and more than once his colleagues left him with a totally erroneous impression of what he meant. No two men could differ more in every way than Mr. Walter Long and Mr. Austen Chamberlain, but they were united in a determination to be loyal to Mr. Balfour, yet both found it extremely difficult. Probably the reason is to be found in Mrs. Dugdale's book. He was never a man's man, and he was continually surrounded by a chorus of admiring nieces, "as always observant of his conversational mood." That type of adulation is bad for any man, but especially for one who is in public life.

With such a Prime Minister, with the party split from top to bottom on the subject of Protection, and with Mr. Wyndham's flirtation with Home Rule causing suspicion in Unionist circles in Ireland, it is not surprising that the Government in which Mr. Austen Chamberlain occupied so prominent a position crashed to disaster in little more than two years. Yet he used to say that there was more in its favour than is generally admitted. It established the Committee of Imperial Defence; it passed the Education Act of



A GOOD PLUCK'D 'UN.

OLD FAMILY RETAINER. "TAKE CARE, MASTER AUSTEN! IT'S VERY WIDE AND UNCOMMON DEEP."
 MASTER AUSTEN. "ALL RIGHT, COLLINGS. WE CAN BOTH SWIM!"

(After John Leech's well-known picture.)

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Punch, April 13, 1904

1902, though it lost the Nonconformist vote in the process; it reformed the Licensing law; and it created the Entente Cordiale with France. Long after the by-elections left no doubt that the country wanted to be rid of him, Mr. Balfour clung to office, it is believed because he wished to establish the Anglo-French agreement firmly before he resigned. In any event, he displayed during the last months of 1905 an ineptitude rare in the annals of British politics, and he then proceeded to accomplish the memorable feat of leading his party to defeat at three successive General Elections. As soon as he ceased to be leader, both he and his party took on a new lease of life.

After the rout of 1906 and the illness of his father, Mr. Austen Chamberlain had, as he said, a difficult part to play. In theory, the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists were still distinct, but as only twenty-three of the latter had survived the election Mr. Chamberlain's immediate following hardly mattered: his task was to leaven the Conservative mass with the doctrine of Tariff Reform, and to ensure that when next they obtained a majority Protection would be carried into effect. He undoubtedly put his finger on the real problem when he told the Unionists of Dublin in December, 1906, that the democracy wanted two things—Imperialism and Social Reform. That is as true to-day as it was a generation ago, and it is the programme of his brother, now become Prime Minister. His immediate task was thus to encourage Mr. Balfour to give the Government no quarter, and to impress the country with the fact that in Tariff Reform the Opposition had an alternative policy. For three years he and his friends did this with remarkable success.

A decided reaction soon began to manifest itself against the Government, while the latter was itself driven every day further to the Left. The municipal elections of 1906 showed that the Liberal tide was already on the ebb, but in March of the following year there took place an event of which the significance could not fail to be observed. The London County Council had for a considerable period been under Progressive control, but in the spring of 1907 the Municipal Reformers, thanks in no small measure to the organizing ability of the late Sir William Bull, won a crushing victory by the net gain of no less than forty-four seats. The following year witnessed a long series of Government defeats at by-elections, and seats were lost at Ashburton, Ross, Peckham, north-west Manchester, Pudsey, Haggerston, and Newcastle-on-Tyne. The quality of these victories was no less impressive than the quantity, and at north-west Manchester, Mr. Joynson-Hicks defeated Mr. Winston Churchill, who was seeking re-election on his appointment as President of the Board of Trade, as was necessary under the existing law. The next twelve months, too, afforded little satisfaction to the Cabinet, for Central Glasgow, Stratford-on-Avon, and Bermondsey were lost by its supporters.

To no inconsiderable extent these reverses indicated but the natural swing of the pendulum after the triumph at the General Election, but there was more to them than that. The Government's legislative record had not been brilliant, and it had dissatisfied some sections of opinion, while alarming others. The Old Age Pensions Act was certainly an item on the asset side, though the real credit for it belonged to Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, but the substitution of the

Territorials for the Volunteers, justifiable as it was soon to prove, was not a measure calculated to make a wide appeal, and the same observation may be applied to the measure which permitted marriage with a deceased wife's sister. Over Ireland the Government had blundered badly. At the General Election its supporters had promised not to introduce Home Rule during the coming Parliament because they wanted to make sure of getting the Nonconformist votes which the Education Act of 1902 had lost to their opponents, but an Irish Council Bill was brought forward in 1907 as a substitute. It was greeted with a storm of derision in Nationalist Ireland:

Is it this you call Home Rule?
Says the Shan Van Vocht.
Do you take me for a fool?
Says the Shan Van Vocht.
To be sending round the hat
Five-and-twenty years for that
Isn't good enough for Pat
Says the Shan Van Vocht.

And the Lord-Lieutenant too,
Says the Shan Van Vocht.
Is he still to be on view?
Says the Shan Van Vocht.
And all them big police
Monumentally obese,
Must I go on feeding these?
Says the Shan Van Vocht.

A Nationalist Convention in Dublin refused to accept the scheme, and the Bill was dropped. In respect of Education and Licensing the Government also suffered severe reverses.

On the other hand, the Trade Disputes Act was

decidedly alarming to moderate opinion, while abroad the situation was not such as to assist the Cabinet, for the rapid growth of the German Navy placed them on the horns of a dilemma: if they did nothing to reply to this menace they provided their opponents with a very powerful argument, while if they accepted the challenge they would alienate their own Left Wing. As if this were not enough, the agitation for the enfranchisement of women was beginning to assume a violent form, and although this campaign cut across the ordinary party lines, it was sufficiently embarrassing to those who were responsible for the government of the country. (In this connection it may be noted in passing that at this date Mr. Austen Chamberlain was opposed to the vote being given to women.) In short, the Administration appeared to be floundering in a sea of difficulties, with which it was unable or unwilling to deal, and the electorate, as usual in such circumstances, was turning to the Opposition.

During all this time Tariff Reform was making steady progress, and Mr. Chamberlain was indefatigable in his efforts. To read his letters to his step-mother, as published in *Politics from Inside*, is to wonder how any man was able to accomplish so much. There seems to have been no important centre in which he did not speak, and he would be in Yorkshire one week and in Devonshire the next: he was most assiduous in his attendance at the House of Commons, and he was always ready to give encouragement to the newcomers, as when he noted: "Stanley Baldwin spoke very well; I think he should develop into a Front Bench man"; and he did not neglect his social duties. Those were the days when an early return to office seemed assured. In January, 1909, the Conservative

Central Office predicted a majority of twenty if an election came immediately, and the atmosphere radiated optimism. The Liberals, however, had a trick or two up their sleeve, and another thirteen years were to pass before a Conservative Government was again in office: when that time came Mr. Chamberlain, by the irony of fate, was not a member of it.

In 1908, Mr. Asquith had succeeded Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman as Prime Minister, and although his views were no more advanced than those of his predecessor, his position was not so secure: consequently he had to be careful not to offend Mr. Lloyd George and the more Radical section of his supporters, who were to him what Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke had been to Mr. Gladstone twenty-five years before. Furthermore, the momentum which had carried Liberalism to victory in 1906 was clearly dying down, and it could only be revived by some popular appeal. In short, a move had to be made, and with the Whigs gone over to Liberal Unionism a move to the Right was out of the question, so a move to the Left it had to be. Such being the case, the obvious course to pursue was to direct the party's activities against the House of Lords, as this would unite the various elements that made up the Government's majority. The Liberals had no use for an Upper House which presumed to reject or amend their favourite measures; the Socialists objected to it on principle; and the Irish knew that they would never obtain Home Rule while the Lords' veto remained unimpaired. A modern historian, Mr. R. H. Gretton, has admirably summed up the position as it appeared to Mr. Asquith and his colleagues in the first weeks of 1909:

The fight with the House of Lords must be pegged to a single issue, of strong appeal to Labour, and startling. If that House could be lured, by rejecting a Budget, into an assertion of their ultimate power, not merely in ordinary matters of legislation, but in a sphere in which for two hundred years they had admitted a tradition of non-interference, the flagrantly obstinate nature of their party spirit would be displayed. If the Budget could be given a markedly social colour, that obstinacy could be made to appear an entrenched class obstinacy of a kind to rouse even the least politically minded voter to some feeling on a constitutional matter. The taxation of what seemed a peculiarly idle form of capitalization profit-taking—the increment on land values—for the purpose of establishing new social services, without draining the means for national defence, was a perfect electoral formula.

It was one of the most astute moves in British political history, for it at once transferred the initiative from the Opposition to the Government. The cause of Tariff Reform suffered a severe reverse, for public attention was distracted first of all by the Budget, then by the constitutional crisis, and lastly by Home Rule. It required the catastrophe of a world war to recall attention to the need for Protection, and by that time there was a new generation of electors to be educated, so that what appeared on the eve of fulfilment in 1909 had to wait another twenty-five years before it was accomplished.

The so-called "People's Budget", which Mr. Lloyd George introduced in 1909, admirably served the purpose indicated above. It was the first Finance Bill

deliberately calculated not so much to raise revenue as to produce, in due course, a social revolution, and it made a special appeal to the heterogeneous elements that supported the Government. There was to be a super-tax on incomes over £5,000; death, legacy, and succession duties were to be raised; a levy on unearned increment was proposed; and the Liquor Trade was to be penalized. On the day it was introduced Mr. Chamberlain wrote: "What a Budget it is! . . . It will touch up a great number of people, and make the Government many enemies, but I should think will be popular with their party gatherings, and afford many good texts for their tub-thumpers." In defending his proposals the Chancellor of the Exchequer set the tone for the election campaign when he said that it was a war Budget for waging implacable warfare against poverty. These tactics had the result that their authors intended. The Budget was fiercely attacked in many quarters, and when it reached the House of Lords that body refused to pass it until the electorate had expressed its approval. The stage was set for a "Peers *v.* People" contest.

Mr. Chamberlain himself confessed that "1910 was one of the stormiest years of my political life". It began with a General Election in which the Opposition gained a hundred seats, but so heavy had been their defeat four years before that this was not sufficient to give them a majority, and the Liberal Government remained in office, though dependent upon the support of the Socialists and of the Irish. In consequence the Budget became law in the spring of 1910, and Mr. Asquith proceeded with the attack on the House of Lords. He tabled three resolutions: the first declared it expedient that the Upper House should be

prevented from rejecting or amending money Bills; the second stipulated that if a Bill passed the Commons in three successive Sessions, and was thrice rejected by the Lords, it should "become law without the consent of the House of Lords or the Royal assent being declared"; and the third limited the duration of any one Parliament to five years, thus modifying the Septennial Act of 1716. These resolutions were carried by 14th April, and the Prime Minister then introduced a Bill founded on them.

The initiative had by now definitely passed into the hands of the Government, and the Opposition was thrown back on the defensive in an issue which did not suit it at all. Mr. Chamberlain's letters at this period describe many discussions with his colleagues as to the best method of extricating themselves from a difficult position, and he and they sought to draw up a constructive programme of Tariff and Social Reform. It was three years since, as we have seen, he had declared in Dublin that "the democracy want two things: Imperialism and Social Reform. We were successful just so long as we combined the two ideals. We lost when we failed to satisfy their aspirations on the second. We can only win by combining them again". This belief, so consonant with his father's practice, he urged on the other leaders of the Opposition, but the issue had hardly been joined when there was a suspension of arms, due to the death of King Edward VII.

It was generally felt to be unfair to the new monarch that he should be plunged at once into a constitutional crisis of the utmost gravity, and so a conference was summoned for the purpose of discovering whether any compromise was possible. The representatives of the

Government were Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, the Marquess of Crewe, and Mr. Birrell, while the Marquess of Lansdowne, Earl Cawdor, Mr. Balfour, and Mr. Chamberlain appeared for the Opposition. There were many meetings, but no agreement was reached. In retrospect, the main interest would seem rather to lie in Mr. Lloyd George's suggestion that the time had come, in view of the growing power of Germany, for the formation of a National Government, and in this he suggested that Mr. Chamberlain should be the First Lord of the Admiralty. The time, however, was not yet ripe for such heroic remedies, and another twenty-one years were to elapse before Mr. Chamberlain found himself, for a brief space, at the Admiralty.

The political truce, which had lasted since the death of the late King, came to an end in November, when the campaign was opened for another General Election, this time solely on the question of the House of Lords. It was then that Mr. Chamberlain became the victim of the first of that series of misfortunes which was to pursue him throughout the rest of his life. During the summer there had been much talk of adopting the Referendum as a means of solving future deadlocks between the two Houses, but that was as far as the matter had gone, when suddenly, while Mr. Chamberlain was speaking in Scotland, Mr. Balfour announced at the Albert Hall that if his party won the forthcoming elections he would submit Tariff Reform to a Referendum. It was this type of conduct which made Mr. Balfour the despair of his followers. In this instance all that happened was that the supporters of Tariff Reform were discouraged, while its opponents were not in the slightest degree conciliated. When the

results of the elections became known it was found that the Conservatives had failed to improve their position.

The effect upon Mr. Chamberlain personally of this ill-advised act has been described by him in *Politics from Inside*: "Worse than the physical fatigue (of the General Election) and in part its cause was the intense depression which settled down on me as a result of the Albert Hall Pledge. To have fought so long and so hard to keep Tariff Reform in the forefront of our programme and to prevent its being whittled away or postponed, to have come so near, as it seemed to me, to success, and then to see this new obstacle suddenly interposed in haste and at the last moment, though we had deliberately rejected it earlier after full consideration, left me miserable and exhausted." The bitterness of disappointment brought Mr. Chamberlain within measurable distance of a breakdown:

. . . But my real illness is known only to Ivy and myself. It's Referendum sickness! Balfour's Albert Hall speech knocked the heart out of me, and I have been fighting without pleasure ever since. Up to that time I was clear we were right, and I could go on with good courage if not with particular hopefulness—but since then the bottom has fallen out of the world. Now I think we are wrong, and the stimulus to work and fight has gone.

Those who have been led to think of Austen Chamberlain as a cold and proud man would do well to reflect upon his character as shown when he was reeling under the blows which an unkind fate dealt him from time to time. He felt these rebuffs very keenly indeed, but it was typical of the man that he kept to the outside world so stiff an upper lip that only his own family knew what he had suffered.

The fight against the Parliament Bill caused serious differences of opinion in the ranks of the Opposition on the question of procedure, and these cut across the old division between enthusiastic and lukewarm Tariff Reformers. The Prime Minister had obtained from the King a promise that if the Bill was again rejected by the Upper House he would create sufficient peers to ensure its passage, and Conservatives could not agree whether the issue should be forced to this extreme. Mr. Chamberlain was for fighting it out, and many of his colleagues agreed with him. The Dukes of Bedford, Westminster, and Marlborough; Lords Selborne, Salisbury, Milner, and Willoughby de Broke; and Sir Edward Carson, Mr. Wyndham, Lord Robert and Lord Hugh Cecil, and Mr. F. E. Smith were of his way of thinking. Among those who did not share these views was Mr. Long, and this fact was to be of great influence when the leadership of the party became vacant a few months later. At the head of the "Die-hards", as they soon came to be called, was the veteran Lord Halsbury, and it was in the form of a banquet in his honour that resistance was first organized. Mr. Chamberlain, like his father before him on more than one occasion, was skirmishing ahead of the main body of his party.

He never regretted the line he had taken:

Reviewing the whole controversy after the lapse of years, I suppose that it must be admitted that it was a mistake for the House of Lords to throw out the Budget in the first instance; but once this action had been taken, I remain of the opinion which I held strongly at the time and for which I had my father's full support, that having entered into the struggle we were bound to see it through.

A Constitutional revolution was worked without the mass of the people apprehending then or since what its effect would be. The fundamental Constitutional laws of this country are left at the mercy of a House of Commons majority in a single Parliament without any of the safeguards which have been thought necessary in every other great democracy. The House of Lords was left unreformed and shorn of its powers. If the creation of peers had been forced it would have brought this Constitutional issue to a head, and a serious effort must have been made to reform the Second Chamber as a necessary step to giving it the powers which it ought to possess.

Lord Lansdowne, the Conservative leader in the House of Lords, did not take this view, and he had the support of Mr. Balfour. They advised the Opposition peers to refrain from voting, and after a good deal of lobbying the Bill was passed by 131 votes to 114. In spite of the excitement in political circles, Mr. Chamberlain was quite right in his contention that the public was in the main unaware of what was happening. The constitutional crisis of 1911 was in no sense a national crisis, and the nation as a whole took little interest in it. It was the year of the Coronation and, save at rare intervals, this distracted the popular notice from politics; and, as was certainly not the case in respect of the battle over the Reform Bill in 1832, it was against a background of general indifference that the fight in connection with the latest change in the Constitution was waged. The result of this apathy has been felt ever since, and at no intervening date has it been found possible to interest the electorate in the reform of the Second Chamber. Perhaps Mr. Chamberlain

was right, and this would not have been the case had the Veto Bill been fought to the end.

Whatever else had or had not been effected, the difference of opinion in the Opposition ranks had driven the last nail into the coffin of Mr. Balfour's leadership. The observations of Mr. Long, who had supported him during the crisis, were no less pungent than those of Mr. Chamberlain. Three General Elections in succession had been lost, and for two of these defeats Mr. Balfour was himself primarily responsible. It was small wonder that there was a revolt among the rank and file, and that the letters B. M. G. (Balfour Must Go) were beginning to appear in the Conservative Press. Yet his colleagues had no thought of replacing him, and all that they desired was that he should lead the party effectively: unfortunately it was not in him to do what they wished.

The past nine months had not, as we have seen, been good ones for Mr. Chamberlain, and once the Parliament Act was out of the way he and Mrs. Chamberlain took a holiday in Italy, where they were when war broke out between that country and Turkey. Mr. Chamberlain's comments on the attitude of the British Press towards Italy seem strangely modern:

The attitude of most of the English Press seems to me gross folly. As we are not in any case going to intervene on behalf of the Turks, we shall not win their goodwill, and we are in danger of losing that of Italy. The Italians certainly counted on our approbation or at least our most favourable consideration; and we preach and scold in angry impotence and affected moral superiority in a way that must be most aggravating. . . . We, whose statesmen have talked of turning the Turks "bag

and baggage" out of Europe, and who have hailed with delight almost every release of any people or place from Turkish sway as a gain to humanity and civilization, hold up our hands in pious horror, and express ourselves as unutterably shocked.

Of course there was no Covenant or Pact of Paris in those days, but Mr. Chamberlain could always be relied upon to display his family contempt for cant and humbug of every kind.

From these considerations the holiday-maker was summoned by a telegram from his brother, Neville, urging him to return home at once, for the question of the leadership had reached a crisis. Before going away Mr. Chamberlain had stated his attitude towards Mr. Balfour in a letter to Mr. F. E. Smith:

I confess that Mr. Balfour's leadership at times makes me despair of the fortunes of a Party so led. He has no comprehension of the habits of thought of his countrymen, and no idea of how things strike them. But I have been very closely and intimately associated with him for the past eight or nine years. I know his strength as well as his weakness. I have received much kindness at his hands as well as some hard knocks, and I am too much attached to him ever to join any combination against him or his leadership. I took this decision long ago. I have held fast to it in spite of many difficulties and some provocation, and I am going to hold fast by it still.

All I can do to put more fight into our policy and to strengthen the fighting and constructive section within the Party, I will do, but what I do must be within the limits set out above, and must not be directed against Balfour personally, or against his leadership.

Mr. Balfour resigned the leadership in the early days of November, 1911, and it at once became obvious that there were four candidates for the succession, namely Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Long, Mr. Bonar Law, and Sir Edward Carson. The last of these was not a serious aspirant, and as Mr. Bonar Law had not yet sat in a Cabinet his claims to consideration would only be discussed when those of his seniors had been dismissed for one reason or another. This left the real contest between Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Long. Both had every right to be considered for the vacant place. The claims of Mr. Chamberlain were obvious to all who had followed his career, but those of his rival were equally respectable. He had held office in every Conservative administration since 1886, including the responsible post of Chief Secretary for Ireland; he represented the landed gentry which had been the backbone of the party for generations; he was a life-long Conservative, not a Liberal Unionist; and in the recent crisis he had not joined the Dichards. Mr. Chamberlain put the position very clearly in later years: "I still called myself a Liberal Unionist, I had only joined the Carlton Club a little time before, and the part which I had taken in recent events had certainly aroused some passing antagonism. Long, on the other hand, was a lifetime Conservative, a typical country gentleman, and senior to me both in length of service in the House and in Cabinet rank, and he aroused none of the jealousies or doubts which were inseparable from my position."

It is obvious from Mrs. Dugdale's biography of her uncle that Mr. Balfour intended Mr. Chamberlain to be his successor, and Lord Balcarras, the Chief Whip, also favoured his candidature. Sir Harry Samuel and

Sir William Bull made an exhaustive canvass of the Conservative and Unionist Members of Parliament with whom the decision lay, and they found that if it came to a vote, Mr. Long would be elected leader by a majority of about seventy. Mr. Chamberlain's friends were also bestirring themselves, and their opinion was that if the issue were fought out the margin would be narrow. At this point there took place an event which could only have happened in England, and which showed British public life at its best. Sooner than have a division taken on the leadership of their party, both men withdrew in favour of Mr. Bonar Law, who was thereupon elected unanimously. It was a magnificent gesture, and it put to silence those who had been endeavouring to make trouble between the two protagonists, though it must always be a matter of controversy whether the compromise was really in the best interests of the party and the country. Mr. Chamberlain, at any rate, was to have differences with the new leader at least as serious as those which he had experienced with the old.

CHAPTER V

THE MIDDLE YEARS

When Mr. Bonar Law was chosen leader of the Conservative Party in the House of Commons it seemed to many that Mr. Chamberlain's career had suffered an irretrievable set-back. Within twelve months he had witnessed the practical shelving of Tariff Reform by Mr. Balfour at the Albert Hall; he had seen his counsels disregarded in the constitutional crisis, and he had in consequence been obliged to act in opposition to his leader; and when Mr. Balfour resigned he had been obliged to forgo his claim to the succession. When one recalls the feeling in political circles at the end of 1911 it is to realize how incredulous the latter would have been had they been told that far from being finished Mr. Chamberlain's career had not, so posterity would say, yet begun. He was, it is true, forty-eight, but at that age his father had still his greatest work before him, while his brother was not yet even in the House of Commons. So it was to be with him and, as so often with the Chamberlains, when he appeared to have little to hope from the future, his chief sphere of usefulness, and the period of his greatest influence over his fellow-countrymen, lay ahead.

That he himself was subject to a feeling of frustration at this time is true, and he doubted the wisdom of concentrating the party's energies so largely upon opposition to the Third Home Rule Bill, to the exclusion of educational work for Tariff Reform. He expresses this

point of view in *Down the Years* when writing of Mr. Bonar Law:

Up to this time (i.e. 1911) and, indeed, for some time longer, our association had been particularly close and I think he liked to have, and placed some reliance, on my advice. But as the Irish question became more acute and increasingly dominated the political scene, thrusting Tariff Reform into the background and causing him to drop the fight for the food taxes, he naturally turned more and more to Sir Edward Carson, with whose attitude in regard to Ulster he was in complete and passionate agreement, whilst he probably thought me lukewarm as I thought him rash and his language dangerous in the mouth of the leader of the Conservative Party, at some stages of the controversy. We thus saw less of one another, and I could not but feel that he had withdrawn some part of his confidence from me.

Mr. Chamberlain felt this very deeply when, in the hope of placating the critics of Tariff Reform, Mr. Bonar Law promised to defer the imposition of new taxes on food in the event of the Conservatives being returned to power at the next election. About the same time Mr. Joseph Chamberlain decided that he would not offer himself for re-election for West Birmingham, and it was his express wish that his elder son should take his place. This meant the severance of a long connection with East Worcestershire, which both member and constituents felt very deeply indeed. "To me the strain was so great that I came out after a short hour with them with a racking headache," Mr. Chamberlain wrote of the meeting at which he

announced his decision. Finally, there was the death of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. It must have seemed as if Fortune, having for years treated Austen Chamberlain as a spoilt darling, had suddenly abandoned him.

So matters continued against a background of increasing violence in every department of the national life, which Mr. Chamberlain noted and deplored. In very many cases moderation of language was cast to the winds, and there were from time to time events, like that at Curragh, which suddenly revealed to the country how close to the abyss it was standing. It is necessary to remember the sensations produced upon those who lived in the troublous years immediately preceding the war, if one is to understand why after the Armistice a policy of appeasement was essential. It is said during a war that the golden age is always the period which is to follow its conclusion, while when hostilities have ceased it is the period before they began. No one in his senses would describe the years from 1910 to 1914 as anything except disastrous in British history, and certainly Mr. Chamberlain was not likely to take any other view.

When war came it was fated that he should play no inconsiderable part in influencing the decision of the Government. On 31st July, he had gone down to Westgate to join his family, confident in the belief that Mr. Asquith was fully resolved to stand by France and Russia. The next day, however, Mr. Amery arrived with the news that the Government had not made up its mind to do anything of the sort, so he immediately returned to London, where he arrived in the early hours of Sunday morning, and was met at the station by Mr. George (now Lord) Lloyd. In *Down the Years*, Mr. Chamberlain has described, with excessive

modesty it will probably seem to the historian of the future, the events of the next three momentous days. No impartial reader studying the record of what then took place can come to any other conclusion than that it was the pressure applied by the Opposition which induced the Government to adopt the course prescribed by the national honour and the national interest, and that this pressure was applied was primarily due to Mr. Chamberlain. Mr. Lloyd told him: "Balfour, of course, understands the position, but Bonar Law does not know what it means, and Lansdowne does not seem to understand." He went on to say that Mr. Chamberlain was the only person who could persuade the Conservative leaders to move. It was, accordingly, Mr. Chamberlain who became the moving spirit, and it was he who drew up the message which was sent to Mr. Asquith. The Chamberlains may have many faults, but they have never failed to rise to a crisis.

When the Coalition was formed in May, 1915, Mr. Chamberlain became Secretary of State for India, and he retained that office for two years. In time of war, and particularly when the war is on the scale of the last one, the record of a Cabinet Minister becomes merged in his country's history, and so it was with Mr. Chamberlain at the India Office. His responsibility for the Department under his charge could, to a very large extent, be nothing but nominal. The Government of India was conducting a major campaign in Mesopotamia, as well as supplying troops for "side-shows" in different parts of the world: in addition there was need for the utmost vigilance in the country itself against the activities of German and Turkish agents who sought to inflame Moslem opinion on the

ground that the British Empire was at war with the Caliph. In these circumstances it was clear that anything like normal peace-time control from Whitehall was out of the question.

The question was soon put to the test. The campaign in Mesopotamia was proved to have been grossly mismanaged, and the Commission which inquired into it revealed a very disquieting state of affairs, particularly where the medical services were concerned. There was never any suggestion that blame attached to Mr. Chamberlain, but he was Secretary of State for India and it was his Department that was concerned; therefore he resigned. It was one of the finest things in his career. There was no need to have taken this course in modern times, and Mr. Chamberlain's action has certainly not been allowed to constitute a precedent. He acted as he did because he was first and foremost a great Parliamentarian, and he believed that if the Parliamentary System is to be worked successfully the rules must be observed: otherwise disaster will ensue. It would have been easy to have remained in office. There was a complacent majority in the House of Commons which would have accepted any reasonable explanation from a Minister in the middle of the war, and there was a censored Press. Mr. Chamberlain nevertheless refused to take the line of least resistance. His behaviour proved him a great constitutionalist and a great gentleman.

Meanwhile, Mr. Asquith had been succeeded as Prime Minister by Mr. Lloyd George, and in bringing this about Mr. Chamberlain had played no small part. It is also pleasing to note that in this crisis he and Mr. Long worked closely together, thereby showing a readiness to forget old differences which was typical of

both men. Mr. Chamberlain could not be accused of favouring the claims of Mr. Lloyd George, with whom, he tells us, he "had at that time never been in any closer relations than those which necessarily exist in the lobby or behind the Speaker's Chair between men of opposite parties who are yet obliged to do business together". Furthermore, Mr. Chamberlain could hardly be expected either to forgive or forget the attacks which Mr. Lloyd George had made on the honour of his father and other members of his family at the time of the South African War: "There had been both then and later much in his methods of controversy which I intensely disliked, and I felt a great distaste for his ways and little confidence in his judgment." At the same time Mr. Asquith's control of affairs left a great deal to be desired, and it was by no means unknown for him to be writing letters while nominally presiding over the deliberations of his Cabinet.

In retrospect it can hardly be denied that even if it were necessary for Mr. Asquith to go, the manner of his going leaves a nasty taste in the mouth. That some of the Conservative leaders were by no means guiltless of rather sharp practice it is impossible to doubt, but Mr. Chamberlain was not among the number. In reading the record of those days one is struck by the utter lack of frankness on the part of the protagonists. There were meetings of one set of Ministers here, and of another set there, but a frank discussion between those principally concerned with a view to forming the combination most likely to bring the war to a successful conclusion was the one thing which never seems to have occurred to anybody. Mr. Chamberlain acted throughout with Lord Curzon, Lord Robert Cecil, and Mr. Long, and to their credit they told Mr. Asquith

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that their only object was to get a stable Government capable of conducting the war successfully. One may regret that Mr. Asquith refused to serve with Mr. Lloyd George under Mr. Bonar Law, but it is easy to understand his point of view, more particularly as the Conservative leader made several blunders during the course of the negotiations. "Bonar Law is an amateur, and will always remain one," was the comment of Lord Robert Cecil.

After his resignation from the India Office Mr. Chamberlain remained for a time out of the Government though his services were by no means wasted, for with Lord Buckmaster and Mr. Keynes he was on a committee to control the dollar expenditure of all departments. When Mr. Lloyd George reorganized his Government after the General Election of 1918 he offered Mr. Chamberlain the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer, and *Down the Years* contains a by no means unamusing account of the negotiations which then ensued. In a manner reminiscent of his father, the prospective Chancellor tells us that when he saw Mr. Bonar Law: "We had a rather stormy conversation. In fact we both lost our tempers for the first and last time in a long friendship." When Mr. Chamberlain discussed the matter with Mr. Lloyd George he said to the Prime Minister: "You will not be surprised that the office has no attractions for me. You have offered it to me in what I must consider a very curt manner at the very last moment—very much as you would throw a bone to a dog. I must say that I am not particularly flattered." In the end he accepted the office, but not until he had persuaded Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Bonar Law that a return to the old Cabinet system must be made at the earliest possible

moment. Mr. Chamberlain was too good a democrat and Parliamentary to view with equanimity a prolongation of the veiled dictatorship of the later war years, or its replacement by a Duumvirate, as was apparently envisaged by Mr. Bonar Law.

For two years Mr. Chamberlain remained Chancellor of the Exchequer, with Mr. Bonar Law as Lord Privy Seal and leader of the Conservative Party, but in 1921 the latter retired on account of ill-health. A decade too late, as it seemed to his friends, Mr. Chamberlain became leader, and resigned the Exchequer to Sir Robert Horne. The clock had been put back, so the unobservant remarked, but it was a vastly more uneasy inheritance upon which Mr. Chamberlain entered than would have been the case ten years before. The Conservatives were in office, it is true, but as partners in a Coalition which they disliked, and which the by-elections proved to be tottering to its fall. There was no opportunity of initiating policy, and all that could be done, in a country seething with discontent, was to work away at the liquidation of the war, and try to paper over the cracks in the ranks of the Government supporters. Above all there was no certainty of the reversion of the Premiership. Mr. Lloyd George seemed the embodiment of perpetual youth, while it was more than likely that (as actually happened) he would bring the administration crashing to the ground before anyone from inside the Cabinet had a chance to succeed him. Yet it is interesting to note that this was the time that the Prime Minister and Mr. Chamberlain came closest together. "It was not," testifies the latter, "until after Bonar Law's retirement . . . that any real confidence or regard was established between us. Through the two

anxious years which followed, I learned to know him at his best."

Mr. Chamberlain was leader of the Conservative Party in the House of Commons from the spring of 1921 until the autumn of the following year, and however difficult the position may have appeared in prospect, in fact it was worse. The rank and file of the party was showing every day a more marked desire to break away from the Coalition, and was arguing that in view of the unpopularity of the Government this was the only course for Conservatives to pursue if they did not wish to go down to disaster with Mr. Lloyd George at the next General Election. The clubs were split from top to bottom, and their political committees were the scene of heated controversy. In the provinces there were the same divisions of opinion as in London. For Mr. Chamberlain the question did not appear as simple as it seemed to many of his followers. He had spent his whole political life in an atmosphere of compromise, and a coalition of Liberals and Conservatives did not shock one who had sat as a Liberal Unionist in Conservative Cabinets. Neither he nor his father had ever put a slavish devotion to party before what they believed to be the national interest, otherwise Mr. Joseph Chamberlain would never have left Mr. Gladstone over Home Rule.

What influenced Mr. Chamberlain most, apart from personal loyalty to the Prime Minister, was his belief that for the parties supporting the Coalition it was a case of hanging together or hanging separately. He had no confidence in his party's ability to win an independent majority of its own, and in view of the strength of the disruptive forces up and down the country, the fall of the existing administration might well be the prelude

to revolution. It is easy to be wise after the event, and it is difficult to carry the mind back to the circumstances of more than fifteen years ago, but because the Diehards proved right, this does not mean that Mr. Chamberlain had no case. His responsibility was as great as any that has confronted a party leader in modern times, and if ever there was truth in the old adage about the inadvisability of swopping horses while crossing the stream it must, he felt, be at this time.

When he told the party conference at Liverpool in November, 1921, that "sooner or later . . . the decision must be given whether we of the present Coalition dissolve, breaking up the forces of order, weakening the party of stability and constitutional progress, or whether, out of that Coalition, dictated to us in the midst of war by the imperious needs of national safety, cemented by common action in years of difficulty and danger since the War, will come a new party, constitutional, democratic, national", he left no doubt as to the trend of his own inclinations.

However, as so often in the past, England was not to be given the opportunity to work out her own salvation in these matters, for across the political scene was cast the shadow of Ireland. For reasons which are still obscure Mr. Lloyd George's administration seemed unable or unwilling to make either war or peace in that country, and Ireland became a veritable running sore. Outrage succeeded outrage, and by the time that Mr. Chamberlain succeeded to the Conservative leadership the writ of the British Government had ceased to run in wide areas of the South and West. From a military point of view there is little reason to doubt, with the information now at our disposal, that if the military had been given a free hand the rebellion

could have been smashed, but it is almost equally certain that the English electorate would not have supported such a policy. The man-in-the-street had been encouraged, from the moment the Armistice was signed, to relax, and as this was his own inclination after the strain of the war years, he followed such advice implicitly. In addition, there were a hundred problems in England itself, so it is hardly surprising that the desire of the overwhelming mass of the population, far from the re-conquest of Ireland, was to forget all about her. Indeed, it would have been difficult if not impossible to have rallied support for the adoption of a strong line towards Sinn Fein. There was also the attitude of American opinion to be taken into account, and with the question of the war debt extremely urgent this was not an aspect of the problem which could safely be ignored. Above all, there was a spirit of compromise and optimism in the air which it was to require years of bitter experience to prove unfounded.

So, in October, 1921, there took place the conference with the representatives of Sinn Fein which was finally to result in the Irish Treaty. Mr. Chamberlain was one of the British representatives, and his colleagues were Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Birkenhead, Mr. Winston Churchill, Sir L. Worthington Evans, Sir Hamar (now Lord) Greenwood, and Sir Gordon (now Lord) Hewart. There were seven plenary sessions, and Mr. Chamberlain was present at all save two. After the seventh session of the Plenary Conference negotiations were conducted through sub-conferences, and the records show that nine of these, out of a total of twenty-four, were attended by Mr. Chamberlain. He also signed the treaty itself at half-past two in the

morning of 6th December, 1921. In *Down the Years* he has recorded his impressions of the Irish delegates, and it is not surprising that Arthur Griffith was the one with whom he found himself most in sympathy. Michael Collins had more in common with Lord Birkenhead: "the very fact that life was to him (i.e. Lord Birkenhead) a gallant adventure, to be as gallantly encountered, created a link between him and Michael Collins without which we might never have reached agreement." Mr. Chamberlain himself did not share these sentiments, for he says of the Irishman: "He had his own code of honour, and to it he was true; but it was not mine, and between him and me there could be no real sympathy, and perhaps only partial understanding."

It now remained for Joseph Chamberlain's son to recommend the Irish Treaty to the party whose leader he had so recently become. He took, as is the family custom, the bull by the horn, and while the negotiations were actually in progress he addressed the party conference at Liverpool on the subject. It was a fighting speech, and some quotations from it may serve to show what Mr. Chamberlain was like when he had his back to the wall. I was present myself, and can testify to the effect of his vigour on an audience which, in the main, profoundly disliked the idea of negotiating with rebels at all. First of all he dealt with the Diehards:

We have heard a great deal recently of Diehards. I am not going to say an unkind word about Diehards. I have been a Diehard myself. If some people had their way I should very soon be a Diehard again. But when the colonel of the

Middlesex Regiment fell mortally wounded at Albuera calling to his men, "Die hard, my men, die hard," he knew what he was fighting for. He knew it was a cause worth giving his life for, and he called upon his men to do the same.

Don't let anybody die before it is necessary. I don't want them to die; I want them to live to fight beside us; and I am convinced that if they will have a little patience, and if they will wait until they know, there will be no split amongst us. . . . No, I have no quarrel with the Diehards. They are men of sincere conviction and of strong faith.

I am not afraid of the Diehards. All I ask of them is that they shall wait until they have the material upon which to judge. I am afraid of men with hot heads to-day who have cold feet to-morrow. You know the type. We see it in every struggle in the men who halloa you on to fight to-day, who ask to-morrow whether you weren't a little hasty, and who a few days later find the means by which you pursue your ends too strong for their queasy stomachs, and after a few weeks, scuttling to the rear, are ready to surrender everything, and make peace at any price.

Mr. Chamberlain then alluded to the negotiations in progress, and proceeded to defend his share in them in a manner which threw much light upon the working of his own mind. Indeed, in this speech he revealed himself to an extraordinary—and unwonted—extent.

Why did an old Unionist policy fail? Not, in my belief at any rate, because it was wrong; I think it was right. It failed because the country would not pursue it consistently through good fortune and through bad. It failed because after Mr. Gladstone's

conversion the Union was no longer a national policy, but a party policy; and Ireland is too close to us, her affairs react too constantly upon us, she is too ever-present with us at Westminster to enable you to build upon party the basis of a permanent solution of the Irish question.

In conclusion he made that confession of error in the matter of the Union of South Africa already referred to on a previous page:

I have one more observation to make, and it is in the nature of a confession. I have been in Parliament for very nearly thirty years, and have given goodness knows how many votes. There are some that I would not repeat with my later knowledge and experience. There are only one or two that I would wish undone. I will tell you one of them. The South African War was a just and necessary war. But for the issues then fought out and settled there could have been no lasting peace in that country. But though peace was signed, though allegiance was sworn, reconciliation lagged behind. Then came a change of Government, and with a new Government a new policy. By a great act of daring faith they conferred upon our recent enemies in the Transvaal and Orange Free State, on the morrow of our victory, full self-government.

I voted against them. I thought it a rash and wicked thing to do. If we could have seen further into the future, if I could have voted in that division with the fuller knowledge I have to-day, I should have known that that great act of faith was not, as I thought it, the destruction of our policy, but its completion and its fulfilment. That is the vote that I would undo if I could undo a vote once given.

That great act, that daring act of faith, led directly to the reconciliation of the races in South Africa; it led to the Union of South Africa; it brought South Africa into the war with us; added German East Africa and German South-West Africa to British territory.

Whether, after another fifteen years had passed, Mr. Chamberlain would still have considered that his second thoughts in the matter of South Africa were better than his first is a moot point; in any event the analogy with Ireland was false, for in the case of South Africa generosity had followed in the wake of victory, while in that of Ireland it seemed rather a concession wrung from weakness. However this may be, what is remarkable is Mr. Chamberlain's courage in saying that he had been wrong, when it would have been so easy to have ignored the subject altogether. His peroration was most eloquent:

Now and again in the affairs of men there comes a moment when courage is safer than prudence, when some great act of faith, touching the hearts and stirring the emotions of men, achieves the miracle that no arts of statesmanship can compass. Such a moment may be passing before our eyes now as we meet here. I pray to God with all my heart and soul that to each of us to whom responsibility is brought there may be given vision to see, faith to act, and courage to persevere.

The Irish Treaty became an accomplished fact, but the difficulties of the Government in general, and of Mr. Chamberlain in particular, increased rather than diminished. Although the Cabinet could still reckon with certainty upon a majority in the House of

Commons when matters were pressed to a division, the feeling was increasing among Conservatives, outside the ranks of the Diehards, that the time was approaching when they need no longer support Mr. Lloyd George and the Coalition. As early as January, 1922, the chief of the party machine, Sir George Younger, differed strongly from the Prime Minister on the subject of an immediate election, and this resulted in a heated controversy between him and Lord Birkenhead which did nothing to smooth the path of the leader. In June there occurred the terrible murder of Sir Henry Wilson, while the summer also saw British relations with France strained to the uttermost, and a war with Turkey was only avoided by the ability of the man on the spot, Sir Charles Harrington. There was also an unsavoury scandal over the sale of honours which further damaged the credit of the Government.

In this way the political situation reached the crisis at the meeting at the Carlton Club in October, when Mr. Bonar Law struck the final blow. "It is part of the irony of life," wrote Mr. Chamberlain in later years, "that I should have wished to end the Coalition with the War, and that he should then have decided to continue it only to bring about its destruction when I had fallen heir to his inheritance, and felt myself bound in honour by the ties which he had created." Fate was never very kind to Mr. Chamberlain at any period of his life, and this crisis was no exception. Interest pointed in one direction, and what he imagined to be his duty urged him in another; being the man he was, he never hesitated. Yet, had he agreed to abide by the decision of the majority that day at the Carlton Club, he would have been Prime Minister within twenty-four hours. Nor was it that he was taken by surprise,

for he had seen Mr. Bonar Law the evening before the meeting, and came away fairly certain of the line the other intended to take, and quite convinced of what would be the result of such action. His attitude may have been politically mistaken, but it reflected, like his resignation over the Mesopotamia Report, enormously to his credit, and his bearing won the admiration of all.

The difficulty of Mr. Chamberlain's position was admirably put by Mr. Baldwin in his speech at the Carlton Club when he was advocating withdrawal from the Coalition:

I would like to give you just one illustration to show what I mean by the disintegrating influence of a dynamic force.¹ Take Mr. Chamberlain and myself. Mr. Chamberlain's services to the State are infinitely greater than any that I have been able to render but we are both men who are giving all we can give to the service of the State; we are both men who are, or who try to be, actuated by principle in our conduct; we are men who, I think, have exactly the same view on the political problems of the day; we are men who, I believe—certainly on my side—have esteem, and perhaps I may add affection, for each other; but the result of this dynamic force is that we stand here to-day, he prepared to go into the wilderness if he should be compelled to forsake the Prime Minister, and I prepared to go into the wilderness if I should be compelled to stay with him.

Mr. Chamberlain, in common with Lord Birkenhead and others who had supported him at the Carlton Club, did not take office under Mr. Bonar Law nor

¹ The term had been applied to Mr. Lloyd George by Lord Birkenhead.

under Mr. Baldwin when he succeeded the former, but assumed an attitude of benevolent neutrality reminiscent of that of Pitt towards the administration of Addington. Had they been in the Government they might have been able to dissuade Mr. Baldwin from the disastrous General Election of 1923, which was one of the rare occasions in his career when he proved completely out of touch with public opinion. "It almost seemed," Mr. Arthur Bryant has written, "as though the most English of Prime Ministers had allowed the Celtic blood in his veins to boil over."

What Mr. Chamberlain's position might have become had Mr. Baldwin not gone to the country, or had he returned victorious, it is impossible to say, but the presence of a Socialist Government in office brought all Conservatives together, and when victory came in the autumn of 1924, Mr. Baldwin secured the King's permission to offer to Mr. Chamberlain the Foreign Secretaryship, which he gladly accepted. The new head of the Foreign Office was sixty-one, and he had many years of public service behind him, but his claim to immortality was to rest on those that still lay ahead.

CHAPTER VI

POWER

Some eight years ago I ventured to prophesy, in my *Life of George Canning*, that to Sir Austen Chamberlain, as to Castlereagh, "posterity may well be more kind than his contemporaries," and such now appears likely to be the case. The long list of those responsible for the conduct of British foreign policy contains many brilliant names, and there has been a great diversity of type. Some Prime Ministers have taken a "leap in the dark", and appointed men with little experience of office but of great promise, such as St. John and Canning; others have preferred performance, if in a different sphere, and to this Castlereagh and Mr. Chamberlain owed their appointment. There can be no doubt which of his predecessors the latter admired the most, namely Castlereagh. His opinion of Canning has already been quoted, and although there is evidence that he modified it to some extent before the end of his life, the Irishman was never a favourite of his. On the other hand, as has been mentioned above, when the Locarno Treaty was to be signed, he insisted that a portrait of Castlereagh should hang on the wall of the room in which the ceremony was to take place. Times were indeed changed since the day when Mr. Chamberlain's Radical ancestors and their friends had snorted at the very name of that statesman.

It was always the custom of Mr. Baldwin to allow his ministers a free hand, and a Foreign Secretary in his Cabinet was particularly favoured in this respect,

for the Prime Minister had little knowledge of international affairs. Mr. Chamberlain, with his great prestige and long practice in control of the House of Commons, was in an exceptional position, and during the four and a half years he was in office he was subject to very little interference in the affairs of his Department. His appointment was popular at home, and created a good impression abroad. I was in Madrid at the time, and coming on top of the Conservative victory at the polls it went far to enhance British prestige. Although Mr. Chamberlain had never been officially connected with the conduct of foreign policy he had always followed developments abroad very closely, and, like Bolingbroke, he had the invaluable advantage of having studied the mind of the Continent on the spot in his youth. He knew not only what the statesmen of other countries were thinking, but how a situation would strike the ordinary citizen, and he was fully acquainted with the fundamental principles of British policy.

Mr. Chamberlain took office in circumstances of peculiar difficulty. The Foreign Office had not been too fortunate in its chiefs since the resignation of Sir Edward Grey. Mr. Balfour gave the impression of being merely a cog in the governmental machine: Lord Curzon could not be brought to believe in the existence of those (Mustafa Kemal, for instance) of whom he disapproved: and Mr. MacDonald had laid far too heavy a burden across his shoulders by combining the posts of Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. The general situation was not, indeed, so threatening as it was subsequently to become, but it was bad enough. The French invasion of the Ruhr, carried out so largely by black troops, had for a time

alienated British opinion, and if Franco-British relations had improved after the fall of M. Poincaré they were still far from cordial. Germany was powerless, though angry and embittered, and it is significant of what was to come that a few weeks after Mr. Chamberlain took office Herr Hitler left Landsberg prison. The military might of France and her allies rendered it impossible to upset the existing order by force, but nowhere was there real security, and in more than one quarter there were threatening clouds.

The first task of the new Foreign Secretary was to denounce the Protocol of Geneva, which had been approved by the previous Government. The purpose of this document was to fill the "gaps" in the Covenant of the League, and its authors claimed that they had foreseen every possible contingency; when an emergency arose the Council was to decide for each country what action the latter should take. The proposals met with a hostile reception throughout Great Britain and the Empire, chiefly for reasons which Mr. Chamberlain admirably expressed in a speech in the House of Commons:

I profoundly distrust logic when applied to politics, and all English history justifies me. Why is it that, as contrasted with other nations, ours has been a peaceful and not a violent development? Why is it that, great as have been the changes that have taken place in this country, we have had none of those sudden revolutions and reactions for the last 300 years that have so frequently affected more logically-minded nations than ourselves? It is because instinct and experience alike teach us that human nature is not logical, that it is unwise to

treat political institutions as instruments of logic, and that it is in wisely refraining from pressing conclusions to their logical end that the path of peaceful development and true reform is really found.

There spoke the man in whose veins there ran no drop of blood that was not English.

The Government decided to reject the Protocol, and it did so in a declaration to the Council of the League where its objections were carefully stated:

The Protocol purports to be little more than a completion of the work begun, but not perfected, by the authors of the Covenant. But surely this is a very inadequate description of its effects. The additions which it makes to the original document do something quite different from merely clarifying obscurities and filling in omissions. They destroy its balance and alter its spirit.

The fresh emphasis laid upon Sanctions, the new occasions discovered for their employment, the elaboration of military procedure, insensibly suggest the idea that the vital business of the League is not so much to promote friendly co-operation and reasoned harmony in the management of international affairs as to preserve peace by organizing war, and (it may be) war on the largest scale.

It certainly seems to His Majesty's Government that anything which fosters the idea that the main business of the League is with war rather than with peace is likely to weaken it in its fundamental task of diminishing the causes of war without making it in every respect a satisfactory instrument for organizing great military operations should the necessity for them be forced upon the world.

In more humorous vein Mr. Chamberlain drew the same conclusions in the House of Commons:

There has been a good deal of talk of late in this country about the safety and security of St. Paul's Cathedral. A great many experts have been consulted, and not all of them, I understand, have taken the same view; but, as far as I know, no expert, however eminent, has thought that the security of that building would be promoted by putting another dome on the top of the existing dome, and, whatever their differences have been they have all agreed that it is by underpinning the foundations that the building will be best preserved. That is our view in regard to the Protocol. We do not think that it would add to the strength of the League or that it would add to the security given by the Covenant.

The attitude adopted by Mr. Chamberlain towards the Geneva Protocol is a sufficient answer to those who allege that he was a rabid internationalist prepared to sacrifice British interests in pursuit of an unattainable ideal. Like the other members of his family he was a realist, and none knew better what was, and what was not, practicable. At the same time a mere negative would have been disastrous, and, even as it was, the news that the British Government had rejected the Protocol had a bad effect upon the general situation.

Mr. Chamberlain, both by upbringing and by inclination, had a great deal of sympathy with France. That country had wished after the war to annex the whole left bank of the Rhine, as in the days of Napoleon, in the interest of her security against Germany, and she had only relinquished the project

on the promise of an Anglo-American guarantee of her frontiers. That promise had not been kept, and she refused to evacuate German territory unless some other form of security was assured to her. On the other side it was clear that Germany could not much longer be regarded as a negligible factor, and there were already signs of that revival of national feeling which a few weeks later manifested itself in the election of Marshal von Hindenburg to the Presidency of the Reich. In these circumstances the British Government decided to make constructive proposals of its own, and when he announced the rejection of the Protocol the Foreign Secretary added:

. . . His Majesty's Government conclude that the best way of dealing with the situation is, with the co-operation of the League, to supplement the Covenant by making special arrangements in order to meet special needs. That these arrangements should be purely defensive in character, that they should be framed in the spirit of the Covenant, working in close harmony with the League and under its guidance, is manifest. And, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, these objects can best be attained by knitting together the nations most immediately concerned, and whose differences might lead to a renewal of strife, by means of treaties framed with the sole object of maintaining, as between themselves, an unbroken peace. Within its limits no quicker remedy for our present ills can easily be found nor any surer safeguard against future calamities.

Thus was the Pact of Locarno born.

Fortunately the Germans were in an accommodating mood. One of the main difficulties in the way of

creating a better feeling between Paris and Berlin since the Armistice has been that when Germany was prepared to be conciliatory France was intransigent, and when France has modified her attitude Germany has been at her most grasping. For a few brief years after Mr. Chamberlain went to the Foreign Office both parties were willing to avail themselves of his services to bring them together. In January, 1924, Dr. Stresemann submitted to the British Government a memorandum far in advance of any previous offer, for it must be remembered that Germany had never voluntarily accepted the Treaty of Versailles, since it had been dictated and not negotiated. Dr. Stresemann now said that his Government was prepared to negotiate a comprehensive arbitration treaty and to enter into a mutual pact of guarantee with the Powers interested in the Rhine. Similar arbitration treaties might be concluded with the other States that had common frontiers with Germany. Nor was this all, for he went on to say that a pact expressly guaranteeing the existing territorial position on the Rhine would be acceptable to his country, who would then guarantee on her part to observe those articles of the Treaty of Versailles which set up a demilitarized zone on the right bank of the Rhine.

Mr. Chamberlain wanted to be quite clear from the beginning as to the extent of the German offer, and he got the following summary accepted by Berlin before he went any further:

That Germany is prepared to guarantee voluntarily what hitherto she has accepted under the compulsion of the Treaty, that is, the *status quo* in the West; that she is prepared to eliminate, not

merely from the West, but from the East, war as an engine by which any alteration in the Treaty position is to be obtained.

Thus not only in the West, but in the East, she is prepared absolutely to abandon any idea of recourse to war for the purpose of changing the Treaty boundaries of Europe, though she may be unwilling, or unable, to make the same renunciation of the hopes and aspirations that some day, by friendly arrangement or mutual agreement, a modification may be introduced into the East, as she is prepared to make in regard to any modification in the West.

Upon this basis Mr. Chamberlain set to work to persuade his colleagues to agree to a British guarantee for what would to-day be termed a regional pact. Their consent was not difficult to procure, for it was impossible to conceive of any crisis on the Rhine in which Great Britain would not be involved, so that the situation could not be made any worse by a guarantee, while it might be definitely improved. In the House of Commons in June the Foreign Secretary put forward the arguments with which he had, one suspects, previously brought the Cabinet round to his point of view:

. . . Whatever may have been possible in the past, no nation is isolated or can isolate itself to-day. I do not mean that there may never again be some minor war or minor struggle which is confined to a small area or to a couple of nations, but I do say that anything which affects the peace of Europe is, in the condition of the world to-day, something which affects and must affect every nation vitally, whether that nation is a belligerent nation or

not. . . . We have signed the Covenant to the League of Nations, and our signature to the Covenant is incompatible with isolation or indifference to anything that may cause a war or provoke a disturbance in any part of the world. . . .

This country and the British Empire have not only obligations under the League of Nations, but have special obligations and rights under the Treaty of Versailles. . . . It is enough to mention these things in order to show that this dream of isolation is a dream and nothing more, and that we are already, by the engagements we have undertaken, inextricably bound up with the fortunes of Europe whether for good or for evil; and our safety lies, not in trying to ignore those obligations, not in seeking that isolation which is impossible, but in a wise and prudent use of our influence and power to maintain peace and prevent war from breaking out again. I submit, therefore, . . . that we are involved, whether we like it or not, and that the question for us to consider is within what limits, upon what principles, and for what purposes we can undertake any fresh obligations.

Mr. Chamberlain had one unexpected piece of good fortune in that those who were responsible for the foreign policy of Germany and France respectively thought as he did. The attitude of Dr. Stresemann has already been sufficiently indicated, and at Paris there was M. Briand. A recent writer, Mr. Hugh Sellon, has adequately summed up M. Briand: "His was not a very original mind, nor had he a sufficiently dominating personality to bend public opinion to his way of thinking. Yet within his limits he rendered great services to France and to Europe. His sensitive nature

had been deeply wounded by the suffering of the war, and he was prepared to go to great lengths, in his control of French foreign policy, to avoid another such calamity. And he had the gift of an engaging and human personality, which enabled him to soften the asperities of diplomatic intercourse." Mr. Chamberlain bore witness to "his large sincerity of heart and mind, his courage, his patience under difficulties, his indifference to self, his far-sighted vision, his loyalty and truth". One thing above all others stands out in M. Briand's career to his credit—he endeavoured to utilize the negotiations initiated by the Emperor Karl to terminate the war by compromise, and had he not been compelled to resign (on another issue) at the crucial moment the world might well have been spared the last twelve months of that catastrophe.

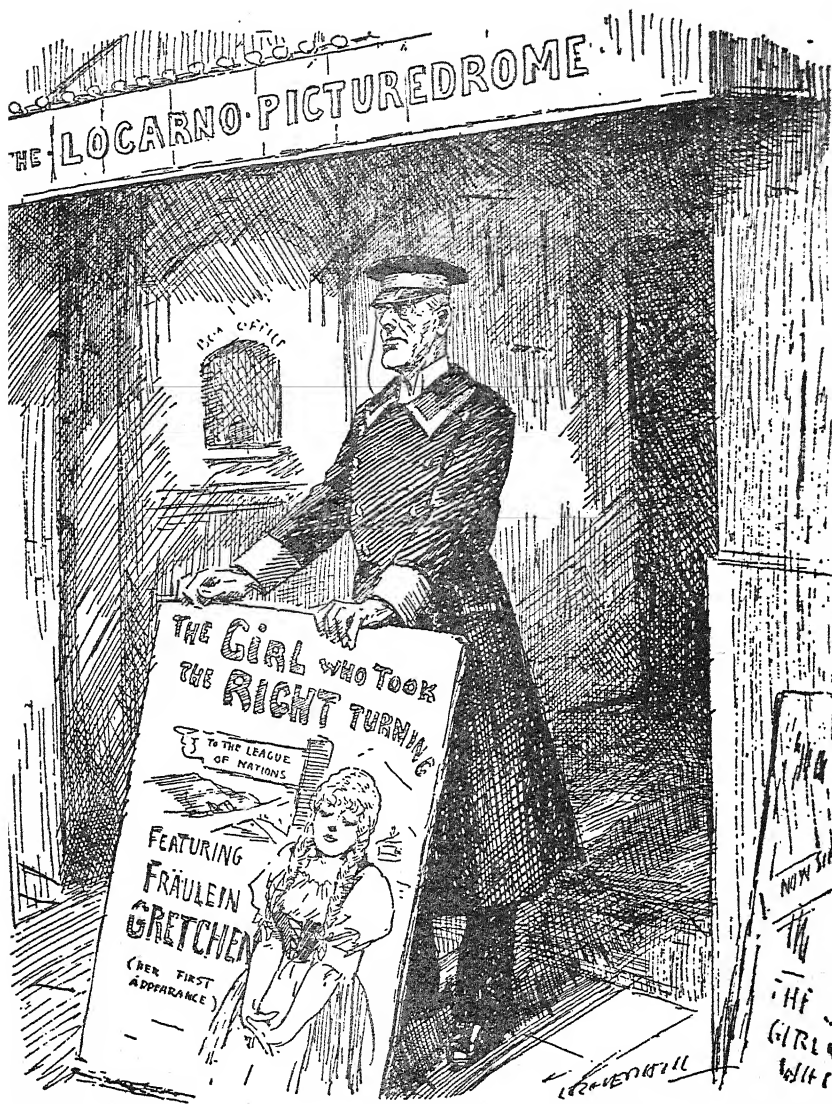
During the summer the negotiations were continued, for Mr. Chamberlain was determined that no conference should meet until the ground had been thoroughly prepared. There was no question of dictation, and the Germans came to the meeting fully seized of the proposals which would be made to them. The conference itself met at Locarno in October, 1925, and thanks to the careful preparation achieved its object in less than a fortnight. The work of the conference was embodied in eight treaties, and it is well to recall them if the importance of what Mr. Chamberlain effected is to be understood.

The main treaty was that of Mutual Guarantee between Germany, Belgium, France, Great Britain, and Italy. By it the first three Powers promised never to go to war against each other, and to settle all disputes between them by peaceful means. The five signatories, collectively and severally, guaranteed the maintenance

of the territorial *status quo* in the West as fixed by the Treaty of Versailles, and the observance of the conditions laid down for the demilitarized zone. In all cases save one the decision whether a *casus faederis* had arisen was left to the Council of the League. The exception was in the event of actual invasion or of a flagrant violation of the stipulations regarding the demilitarized zone, if the guaranteeing Power was satisfied that "the violation is an act of unprovoked aggression, and that by reason either of the crossing of the frontier or the outbreak of hostilities, or the assembly of armed forces in the zone, immediate action is necessary". In this case each party was to come to the aid of the victim. This was the only one of the Locarno treaties in which Great Britain was immediately concerned, as the others dealt with the relations between Germany and her Eastern neighbour, or between France and her allies.

Before proceeding to discuss the Locarno Pact, let us hear Mr. Chamberlain's defence of it in the House of Commons:

. . . I turn to the actual Treaty of Locarno, that Treaty of Mutual Guarantee which is the only treaty that His Majesty's Government propose to sign. I would first make three observations about it. In the first place, it is a treaty which is aimed at nobody, pointed at no one, threatening no one and menacing no one. In the second place, it is a Treaty of Mutual Guarantee. The obligations of France to Germany are the same as the obligations of Germany to France; the same is true of Belgium and Germany; and the obligations of the guaranteeing Powers, Italy and Great Britain, are the same to Germany as they are to France or as they are to



A LEAGUE TRIUMPH.

WITH MR. PUNCH'S CONGRATULATIONS TO THE BRITISH COMMISSIONAIRE.

Punch, October 21, 1925

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Belgium. This is not, then, a treaty directed by one group of Powers, against any other Power or group of Powers, but is a Mutual Treaty of Guarantee among the Powers concerned to preserve peace on their frontiers and between themselves. The third point that I would ask the House to observe is that all the agreements initialled at Locarno conform strictly to the spirit of the Covenant and the spirit of the League of Nations, that they are placed under the guardianship of the League, that the League is the ultimate authority in regard to the issue which may be raised, and that what we have done is not to subtract from the power or the authority of the League, but to support and to underpin that authority and power for the settlement and reconciliation of conflicts between nations.

Mr. Chamberlain then proceeded to analyse the articles of the treaty in detail, and to show that, as would not have been the case under the Protocol, "the British Government of the day remains the judge, the only judge, of whether . . . immediate danger has arisen."

I believe that a great work of peace has been done. I believe it above all because of the spirit in which it was done and the spirit which it has engendered. It could not have been done unless all the governments, and I will add all the nations, had felt the need to start a new and better chapter of international relations; but it could not have been done unless this country was prepared to take her share in guaranteeing the settlements so come to.

. . . We who live close to the Continent, we, who cannot dissociate ourselves from what passes

there, whose safety, whose peace and the security of whose shores are manifestly bound up with the peace and security of the Continent, and, above all, of the Western nations, must make our decision; and we ask the House to approve the ratification of the Treaty of Locarno in the belief that by that treaty we are averting danger from our own country and from Europe, that we are safeguarding peace and that we are laying the foundations of reconciliation and friendship with the enemies of a few years ago.

The Treaty was signed in London on 1st December, 1925, in the following year Germany took her place on the Council of the League of Nations, and within five years the complete evacuation of German territory had been effected. For his work in the conclusion of the Locarno Pact the Foreign Secretary became a Knight of the Garter, in accordance with the precedent set in 1878 when Lord Beaconsfield was so created on returning from Berlin bringing "Peace with Honour".

The Locarno Pact is the best-known episode in Sir Austen (as he must now be called) Chamberlain's career, and by it he is often praised or condemned. It is therefore necessary to look into the matter rather closely. In the light of what has happened during the past five years it is easy to sneer at the whole business as a pious hope which was not fulfilled. There is, it must be admitted, something in the gibe, for Locarno was meant to be, not only an end, but also a beginning: that this was not so was due to circumstances, chiefly economic, over which the signatories had no control. No one will deny that it brought about an amelioration of the international situation for several

years, and it would be difficult to point to any other agreement since the war that has effected as much. So far as Great Britain was concerned this relaxation of the tension on the Continent allowed Mr. Baldwin to carry on his policy of appeasement at home, and it must not be forgotten that the year which followed the conclusion of the Locarno Pact was that of the General Strike. When all is said and done, Locarno enabled peace to be maintained when it would otherwise not have been, and as peace, based on justice, is the primary British interest, the Pact very definitely served a national purpose.

Sir Austen has been accused of over-partiality to France at Locarno, but it is difficult to substantiate the allegation. For the first time since the war he brought Germany into a conference with her former enemies on a basis of perfect equality, he secured her election to the Council of the League, and he persuaded the French so to modify their treaty with Poland that in the event of the latter making an unprovoked attack on Germany they would be unable to count on the support of their Western ally. It has been objected that one of the purposes of the Pact, namely the disarmament of France, was not accomplished, and that Great Britain and Germany were therefore deceived. Sir Austen has dealt with this argument in *Down the Years*. "The object of the Treaty was to preserve peace, not to secure disarmament . . . disarmament was not a condition of the Treaty, and no deception was practised on the Germans in this respect." The Locarno Pact gave Europe a breathing-space, and if Europe took but little advantage of it the fault did not lie with its author.

Limits of space forbid any detailed account of

Sir Austen's attitude towards two other great problems with which he was confronted, those of China and Egypt. In the case of the former his difficulty was the same as that of his successors down to the present day. Great Britain can only act effectively in the Far East in co-operation with the United States, and that co-operation is exceedingly difficult to procure. Furthermore, British interests are linked with Japanese action, for if Japan behaves in such a way as to rouse Chinese hostility, all foreigners, including ourselves, suffer. Those appear to be the unalterable facts of the situation in the Far East. Some of Sir Austen's critics would have liked him to take a firmer stand against the encroachments of the Chinese Nationalists, but the Government had not the necessary force at its disposal. The British electorate cannot have it both ways: they cannot have disarmament in an armed world, and expect their Foreign Secretary to behave like a Canning or a Palmerston. Sir Austen displayed firmness when and where he could, notably in defence of British interests at Shanghai (he was far too firm to please the Socialist Opposition), but to have dispersed troops in the interior would have been to invite a repetition of the siege of the Legations during the Boxer rebellion, or even of the tragedy of Gordon. In any event, if he did not find a solution to the Chinese Question in its modern form, none of his successors has been any more fortunate.

In Egypt the Foreign Secretary was confronted at once with the brutal murder of Sir Lee Stack, and he can hardly be accused of not upholding British prestige in the action he took then. The Egyptians were quickly made to realize that there were limits beyond which England was not prepared to go, and to drive the lesson

home a large force of British troops marched through the streets of Alexandria and Cairo. At the same time Sir Austen did everything in his power to put the admittedly unsatisfactory Anglo-Egyptian relations upon a permanent footing. In 1927 matters got so far as a draft treaty, of which the main points were that Egypt was to become a member of the League of Nations; that British troops were to remain in the country for another ten years, when a fresh agreement was to be made; that Great Britain was to be represented at Cairo by an ambassador who was to take precedence of the envoys of other Powers; and that the organization of the Egyptian Army, and the existing administration of the Sudan, were to remain unaltered. These hopes were wrecked upon the rock of Wafd opposition, but the Nationalists proved so incapable of governing the country that the King found himself obliged to establish a temporary dictatorship. Such was the position when Sir Austen left office, and it required the lapse of several years, combined with the Italian conquest of Abyssinia, to effect any appreciable modification in the situation. When the final treaty between Great Britain and Egypt was signed, it approximated very closely to that drawn up by Sir Austen Chamberlain.

With the resignation of Mr. Baldwin's administration after the General Election of 1929, Sir Austen once more passed into private life, and he was not destined to hold office again save for a few short weeks. What place is his in the long line of British Foreign Secretaries? The question is not an easy one to answer, for we are still too close to the events with which he had to deal to be able to view them in their proper

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perspective. He had not, like some of his predecessors, the chance of initiating any new policy, and his pre-occupation, like that of Castlereagh, was to liquidate a great war. Sir Austen has two claims in particular to distinction as Foreign Secretary: he never took a step without preparing the way carefully indeed, and his historical sense rendered him profoundly aware of the mistakes of his predecessors. Great Britain has numbered many eminent statesmen among those who have controlled her foreign policy, but they have not all been equally successful. Wolsey, for example, was almost certainly the first English statesman to realize the advantages that could be derived from establishing a balance of power on the mainland of Europe, and for this he deserves more credit than he usually receives; but he made the mistake of throwing his country's weight into the scales too often, with the result that in the end both France and Spain always discounted English intervention in advance, so that it became quite ineffective. In a later age Palmerston made much the same mistake, with the result that it was justly said he began his career by standing up to Napoleon and finished it by going down on his knees to Bismarck.

Oliver Cromwell is often acclaimed as a master of foreign policy, though it is difficult to discover upon what ground. He certainly made Britain respected (in this connection generally a synonym for being disliked) on the Continent, but he lacked the foresight to perceive that Spain was the declining and France the rising Power of the day. No doubt it was very flattering to the national pride to hear of the Battle of the Dunes and of the capture of Dunkirk, but the only tangible result of Cromwell's foreign policy, apart from an economic crisis at home, was to accelerate the

establishment of that French hegemony of Europe which was a nightmare to British statesmen for the next half-century. Had the Lord Protector lived for another ten years, he would in all probability have realized the error which he had committed, and would have reversed his policy accordingly; but this could only have been done at the cost of a war with France for which the country was far too exhausted. In short, Cromwell looked at European politics with the eyes of an Elizabethan, and was so obsessed with the prejudices of a bygone age that he would not look the facts of his own day in the face. In the next generation Bolingbroke deserves the highest praise not only for his conduct of the negotiations leading up to the Treaty of Utrecht, but for the moderate terms of that settlement: however, he fell from power too soon for us to be able to judge of his statesmanship in time of peace.

The Pitts, father and son, stand out pre-eminent in the field of foreign policy, for there was in them, as in Joseph Chamberlain, that mixture of realism and imagination which goes to the making of a great statesman. Chatham rode the storm of the Seven Years' War, and displayed a knowledge of men and affairs that has been rarely equalled, but never excelled, in the course of human history. As for the younger Pitt, no tribute to him can be more just or more eloquent than that of Mr. J. G. Lockhart in *The Peacemakers, 1814-1815*.

It is Pitt's supreme claim that he continued to govern England from the grave; that, while he suffered a bodily death in 1806, his spirit marched on for twenty-one years, to the death of Canning in 1827. . . . Ten years were to pass. Then, when

the bells were ringing for victory; when the army which Pitt planned, under the leader whom Pitt chose, struck the hammer blows of the Peninsular War and withstood the reeling shock of Waterloo; when the statesman whom Pitt taught brought back from Vienna the pacification which Pitt had described, but did not live to see—then we may fancy that, as Castlereagh carried to the House of Commons tidings of “peace with honour”, long awaited and dearly bought, and the cheers volleyed forth, to a faithful few must have come a swift, transitory vision of a tall slender figure, with a little cocked hat above a tilted nose, walking stiffly to his seat, to a whisper like the rustle of autumn’s leaves: “Mr. Pitt! Mr. Pitt!”

The land had giants in those days, for to Pitt succeeded Castlereagh and Canning. The former saw to it that the Treaty of Vienna, like that of Utrecht, was realistic and not vindictive, and that France at the earliest possible moment was admitted as an equal to the counsels of the Powers. Canning was the first Foreign Secretary to be guided in any marked degree by the commercial needs of the country, and when he “called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old”, he not only put a stop to the progress of the Holy Alliance across the Atlantic, but he secured England some very valuable new markets. With the death of Canning there was a falling-off until the appearance of Sir Edward Grey. Palmerston has already been mentioned, and Lord Salisbury was in his later years largely dependent upon Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Balfour. Lord Beaconsfield was Prime Minister during six troubled years in Europe’s history, but it is difficult to resist the conclusion that his foreign

policy was that of an amateur, eager to snatch a triumph abroad for the purpose of defeating his opponents at home. Sir Edward Grey, on the other hand, had the root of the matter in him; he exhibited the clarity and vision which were the foundations of Canning's triumph, and his diplomacy, first in completing the Triple Entente, and then during the various crises which preceded the war, was masterly. He had, too, to force his policy upon reluctant colleagues in the Cabinet, and it was no easy task to convert some of them to the principles of a friendly understanding with Russia. Yet he held to his purpose in spite of the opposition of members of his own party, and he was abundantly justified by the result.

Sir Austen Chamberlain was in the line of succession to these great men. He understood, as has been shown, the fundamental principles of British foreign policy as well as they did, but he was subject to one handicap which none of his predecessors had known for nearly 300 years—he could not speak in the name of an invulnerable England. It is true that we have always reduced our armaments in the fit of optimism which in this country invariably follows the conclusion of a war, but in the past that did not matter very much because the Navy remained supreme. In the twenties of last century, for example, it was with the greatest difficulty that enough soldiers were collected to give the Duke of York the funeral to which his military rank entitled him, but Canning was at the same time able to pursue his Latin-American policy secure in the knowledge that without the consent of England the Powers of the Holy Alliance could not move a man or a gun across the Atlantic, while England herself was absolutely immune from attack. The coming of

the aeroplane has changed all this, and although Great Britain was relatively stronger when Sir Austen was at the Foreign Office than she subsequently became, he never had the easy assurance of overwhelming might behind him.

The great merit of Sir Austen as Foreign Secretary would seem to lie in his realism: he did not hanker after the unattainable, but did his best with the tools that he had. The Locarno Pact, and consequently its author, was unduly praised at the time, just as it is now unduly depreciated, but the time will come when it will be realized that Sir Austen did provide Europe with an opportunity to set its house in order in peace. If no advantage were taken of that opportunity the fault does not rest with Great Britain or her then Foreign Secretary.

It is hardly necessary to say that out of office Sir Austen took as keen an interest in what was happening abroad as when his party was in power. I remember lunching with him at the United University Club one day in November, 1930, and as I had just returned from Italy, where I had seen Signor Mussolini, the conversation naturally turned on Italian colonial ambitions. At that time the Duce was seeking expansion in the Mediterranean area, and Sir Austen was worried over the possibility of a conflict between France and Italy in respect of Tunis. "The best solution for Europe," he said, "would have been to let Italy expand into Asia Minor, as she was promised by the Treaty of London. No British interest would have been affected, and it would have provided a guarantee against the spread of Russian influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. But the Turks are a nation again, and it is too late to think of that now."

I asked him why the Greeks had been encouraged to invade Asia Minor to their ruin. "That is a thing I, too, have always wondered," he replied. "I asked Curzon and Arthur Balfour several times, but could never get a satisfactory answer out of either of them." Neither then nor at any other time have I discussed foreign affairs with him without being impressed by his knowledge of the background.

One other personal reminiscence may not be out of place here, as it throws considerable light on the man. In my book, *Walter Long and His Times*, I had stated that the first suggestion of compromise in the contest for the leadership in 1911 came from Mr. Long, who sent Sir Austen a message by Mr. Chaplin to say that if Sir Austen would stand down in favour of Mr. Bonar Law, he, Mr. Long, would do the same. When the book came out I received the following letter from Sir Austen:

I have this morning got your book and opened on the chapter of A. J. B.'s resignation.

Can you tell me anything as to your authority for the account you give on pp. 171-2 of the manner of Long's decision?

No such message from him ever reached me through Chaplin or anyone else—which does not prove that it was not sent, of course.

Curiously enough I have a book in the Press with my contemporary account of events at that moment and have passed the proofs, but I have to-day asked the publisher to send me a "revise", so that I may put in a reference by footnote or otherwise to your account. I think that there is time.

My story is that I met Walter (with Chaplin and later Balcarres) at the House on Nov. 9th, that we

agreed that we ought to allow our claims to go forward *at that stage* but might take a fresh decision later, and that on the Friday or Saturday I sent Balcarres to Walter with the proposal that we should both withdraw in favour of Bonar Law. This was written at the time to my father and is, I am certain, correct.

You may be sure that I shall not treat any difference in our accounts (yours presumably deriving ultimately from Walter himself) in any hostile or controversial spirit, but unless it is too late I must make some allusion to it to avoid misunderstanding.

I replied to the effect that my authority for the statement was the diary of the late Sir Henry Samuel, which had been generously placed at my disposal by his son, Captain C. H. Samuel.

Sir Austen wrote again:

Many thanks for your reply. As the book is in the Press and the extracts in the *Sunday Times* begins to-morrow, I have had to deal with the matter briefly and at once.

I send a copy of the note I have added to my contemporary letter. (Forgive its untidy form. My secretary is away on her holiday.) I trust that you will feel that I have observed my promise not to be controversial. Apparently our minds worked on the same lines (Walter's and mine I mean) though I don't think that Bal. can ever have received Walter's message. There has not been time to consult Bal.

Then followed the footnote which is to be found in *Politics from Inside*. My own part in this episode was of trifling importance, but the interchange of letters is

illustrative at once of Sir Austen's fairness and courtesy.

When the first National Government was formed in August, 1931, Sir Austen became First Lord of the Admiralty, and was called upon to deal with the mutiny at Invergordon. That tragic story has now been told in full, and there is nothing whatever in it which reflects the slightest discredit upon the then First Lord. The episode was the logical sequel of a series of blunders on the part of various people at the Admiralty, and of these blunders the disruptive elements took full advantage. Sir Austen is dead, and the mutiny is now history; every circumstance of the affair has been investigated, but no one has sought to incriminate him. It was more than a little unfortunate that his last term of office should have been marked by an event of which no Englishman can read even now without a feeling of shame, but it was his misfortune, not his fault.

We are now on the threshold of the last years of Sir Austen's life, when, like his father between 1886 and 1895, he exercised a control over the House of Commons which he had hardly known when he was its Leader. He owed this very largely to the fact that he reserved himself for the House, which thus showed its appreciation of his respect for Parliament. In April, 1933, I asked him to speak on the international situation at the English Review Luncheon Club, of which I was then chairman, but he reluctantly refused, telling me that he thought he ought to reserve everything he might have to say on foreign affairs for a speech in the House of Commons. In that very month, indeed, he had profoundly stirred public

opinion by a declaration that until the new rulers of Germany (Herr Hitler had recently come into power) modified their policy there could be no question of either Disarmament or of a revision of the Peace Treaties. His was thus one of the first voices that was raised in favour of putting the national defences in order, and it is an open secret that had he been in the Cabinet re-armament would have begun a good deal earlier than was actually the case.

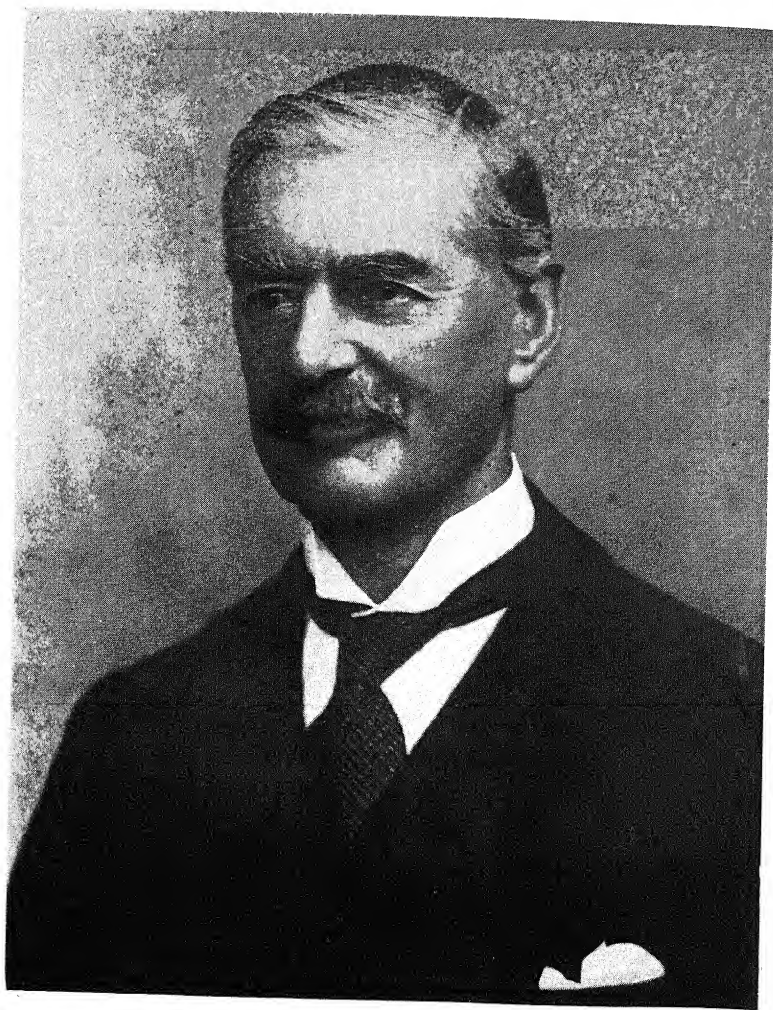
Perhaps Sir Austen's influence over the Government and the House was most marked during the Abyssinian crisis. It was his attitude towards the Hoare-Laval proposals which determined Mr. Baldwin to drop them, and it was his opposition to the Socialist vote of censure that saved the Government from defeat. We are still too close to those events to have sufficient information about them to enable a final judgment to be passed, but an explanation of Sir Austen's attitude is not difficult. He was, as has been said, a realist. While there still appeared to be a chance that Sanctions would stop the aggressor he was unwilling to see their abandonment, for he was under no illusions that if the League failed to prevent Italy from conquering Abyssinia it would never again be an effective force in its existing form. As soon, however, as the Italian victory was won he began to advocate the lifting of Sanctions, partly because, as he said, they had failed and were now dangerous, and partly because the German armed occupation of the demilitarized zone on the Rhine had raised other questions of more immediate concern to Great Britain. There was nothing inconsistent in such an attitude, which was that of the vast majority of Sir Austen's fellow-countrymen, if not of the professional pacifists.

In June, 1936, his brother, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, spoke out at the 1900 Club Dinner, and Sanctions were dead.

Within a year Sir Austen was no more, for he died on 17th March, 1937, and the public life of the country was the poorer for his passing. He was a scholar as well as a statesman, a lover of nature and rural pursuits, a devoted husband and father; indeed, it was the happiness of his home life that enabled him to emerge unscathed from the storms of his public career. It was only at a relatively advanced age that he began to write, but he had an extremely able and graceful pen, and it is a matter for the deepest regret that he made so late an appearance as an author. All his life he had read widely, and this was apparent in all he did and said. Perhaps the most suitable epitaph is one which would have pleased him greatly—he never despaired of his country.

IV

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN



MR. NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN

[Photo: Vandyk]

CHAPTER VII

APPRENTICESHIP

"One must remember," said a Minister of Health in a speech at Leeds, "what happens to the family when the mother is taken away, and there are young children left who never can have the care and influence which a mother alone can exercise over them." Then the statesman added, in a lowered voice: "My own mother died in childbirth." That Minister of Health was Mr. Neville Chamberlain. We have already seen how deeply the loss of his second wife affected Joseph Chamberlain, and, as is neither unnatural nor unusual in such circumstances, the tragedy for a time seemed to create a gulf between the widower and his children, so that the latter suffered a double blow. Her stepson has a charming reference to the second Mrs. Joseph Chamberlain in his book, *Politics from Inside*: "I still see her as, on our arrival with my father at his new home, she came running from the rockery where she was planting the ferns they had gathered on their honeymoon in the Lakes, pulling off her gauntlet gloves, with the trowel still in her hand and a loving welcome for her new children which never failed in her short life. She bore my father four children. Between them and us she made no distinction, and amidst all the cares of this growing family and of my father's public life—for he soon became Mayor of Birmingham—she always found time to play with us,

to read to us, and to watch over us with all a mother's love."

It was the time when Joseph Chamberlain was beginning his municipal career, and from the first his wife encouraged him. "While we were at Ilfracombe in 1869 I received an invitation to stand for the Town Council, which I accepted with her cordial concurrence." That was the year in which the present Prime Minister was born. She was the ideal wife for a busy public man. "The articles which I wrote in the *Fortnightly Review* were submitted to her criticism first, and it was with her approval and at her desire that the first of these articles was sent to the Press." Nor was this all, for "she gave up much time to the arrangements of reports and extracts and speeches which might be useful in my work, and which she took pleasure in indexing and arranging for ready reference". As a hostess she left nothing to be desired, and she knew how to make guests at their ease both at home and at the Town Hall. As Mayoress of Birmingham she helped her husband to entertain the Prince and Princess of Wales during their memorable visit to the city. Yet, "she was never very strong, and had a delicate and spiritual look which sometimes made me anxious, but her spirit was indomitable, and she did not know what idleness was." That courage and industry she was to transmit in full measure to her son. In February, 1875, she died within twenty-four hours of giving birth to a child, who followed its mother so soon afterwards that both were laid in the same coffin.

Neville was the eldest of his father's second family, and there were also three girls. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was left with six young children, of whom the

eldest was not yet sixteen and the youngest was under two. The widower's second sister came to live with her brother and took charge until her own marriage, and then a still younger sister succeeded her. All the Chamberlains bear witness to the loving care which they received at the hands of their aunts, but it could never be the same as a mother's devotion. Their father, too, was of necessity not much with them, but the young people had no serious differences, and when the two sons were both in Parliament no strain proved great enough to separate them.

From 1882 to 1886 Neville Chamberlain was at Rugby, like his brother before him, and when he first reached Cabinet rank, the *Meteor*, that is the paper edited by the boys themselves, merely inserted the notification in a list of school appointments. On this the new Minister sent the following telegram: "Many thanks—there's nothing like the *Meteor* for putting one in one's place." He was to be the first Rugbeian Prime Minister of England, though, curiously enough the school had already provided France with a Premier in the person of William Waddington, the son of a wealthy Englishman who had established a spinning factory across the Channel. On leaving Rugby the youngest Chamberlain attended Mason College, Birmingham, which was subsequently to form part of the university which his father did so much to bring into existence. After that he went into an accountant's office, and, as became a future Chancellor of the Exchequer, he acquitted himself so well that at the end of six months the principal offered him a salaried position without waiting for the completion of his training. Light is thrown upon his activities in another connection at this time in a letter from his father to

Miss Endicott shortly before their marriage: "After dinner I got down one of the farces I wrote a long time ago and read it to the family, who proved a most indulgent audience. Then Neville played to us a *Lied* of Mendelssohn's and part of a Sonata by Beethoven." The vision conjured up by these two sentences is of a happy family party, with the terrible "Joe" in a mood which no Gladstonian would have conceived as even possible.

How long Neville Chamberlain might have remained an accountant it is impossible to say, for in 1890 his father embarked upon an enterprise which was to have considerable influence upon his future career. It has already been shown how, when Mr. Joseph Chamberlain retired from business to enter public life, he sold out, and a good deal of his capital was invested in South American securities. About the end of the eighties there was a slump in Argentina, and he suffered severely. It was then that he met in Montreal the Governor of the Bahamas, who was full of the possibilities of that colony with the cultivation of the sisal plant. It would, he felt, give a hemp equal to the best Manila, and if grown on a sufficiently large scale would develop the islands, and enrich the capitalist who was bold enough to undertake the venture. As a rising Imperialist Mr. Chamberlain was interested, and as a man, in view of his financial position, he was attracted, and Mr. Garvin prints some extracts from a letter to Mr. Jesse Collins which reflect his attitude:

On this trip an incident occurred which may have great importance in the fortunes of the Chamberlain family. At Montreal I saw Sir Ambrose Shea,

Governor of the Bahamas, an intelligent man, full of a new discovery which is to revolutionize the condition of the islands. It consists of a plant growing like a weed, which was the curse of the islands till Shea found that it would give a hemp equal to the best Manila. Now the cultivation is beginning on a large scale, and English capital is being brought in. From his account it looks as if enormous fortunes might be made out of this discovery and the prospect is so tempting that after thinking it over I wrote to Shea asking him for an option on 20,000 acres of land. . . . I shall not touch the matter unless there is really a large fortune in it. . . .

Soon afterwards he sent out his two sons to investigate the possibilities.

Their experiences afforded plenty of evidence of the difficulties which lay ahead. The two brothers made a tour of the outer islands in a twelve-ton cutter, of which the only cabin was just large enough to allow one person to sleep on the floor and another on the seat, while it was but four feet high. To make matters worse the weather was execrable, and the boat shipped water continuously, so that the cabin came to resemble a lake. One of the crew was washed overboard, but was fortunately recovered. To add to their discomfort both Chamberlains were terribly sea-sick, though usually good sailors. Still, it is astonishing how little such things count in one's twenties, and the young men completed their mission. They fixed on the island of Andros as the best site for the projected sisal plantation, and then reported to their father. In due course he took their advice, and exercised his option in Andros. Then, as so often with him, he proceeded to

do the unexpected, and sent Mr. Neville Chamberlain out to the island to look after his interests. Mr. Garvin does well to describe the step as "characteristic in its mixture of Nonconformist vigour and Elizabethan spirit". In his own youth he had been sent from London to Birmingham to watch the money which his father had put into a business of which he knew nothing. If he could successfully leave shoes for screws, then his younger son could forsake statistics for sisal. So to Andros the young man went at the age of twenty-two.

Mr. Neville Chamberlain needed all his family courage. Andros was sparsely inhabited by a handful of poverty-stricken negroes, who eked out a miserable existence fishing for sponges, and there were only three white men on the island. The latter is of coral formation, and was covered by inferior pines and stunted bush. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain had engaged as manager an Englishman called Knowles, who had been born on the island, but when he and Mr. Neville Chamberlain first arrived no house was ready for them. Accordingly, they were compelled to take up their residence in a newly built negro hut: this was a long building of three rooms without windows, a cement floor, and a thatched roof which was the happy hunting-ground of innumerable scorpions and centipedes. Mr. Chamberlain shared this abode with his manager and fifteen native carpenters while his own house was being built. The cooking, it may be added, was done by a negro woman, and the menu consisted chiefly of porridge, rice, fish, and eggs, with every now and then a scraggy chicken of the type which is peculiar to the tropics.

The young pioneer's duties were multifarious. His

first task was to engage men, and to clear the ground. As soon as the men were earning regular wages a store had to be opened for them, and before long Mr. Chamberlain found himself serving behind the counter when the day's work was done. As the clearing of the ground proceeded it was found necessary to make a road, and this involved blasting through the coral rock, a task which he had to supervise although his knowledge of explosives was nil. In a letter written during these strenuous days he tells something of the life he was leading:

At 5 o'clock I get up, and after a cup of tea go down to the field, which is about three-quarters of a mile off. There I superintend the landing of lumber, and direct the men who are at work clearing. Sometimes I take an axe myself, and do a little work, and this creates great enthusiasm. About 9 I go back home for breakfast, and then return to the field, where I have my lunch sent me at 1. At 4 I stop, go home to tea, after which life becomes unbearable by reason of the millions of mosquitoes which necessitate the burning of "trash" on the house floor until I go to bed about 8.

Matters improved, and life became more comfortable for Mr. Chamberlain when his own house was finished. It had a wide verandah, and was fitted with mosquito screens. Here he could at any rate enjoy his evenings undisturbed, and, like his father and brother, he was an omnivorous reader. On Andros he had plenty of opportunity of indulging his taste. Like all healthy young men he went through various phases of reading: at this time he was specially interested in the theory of evolution, and in the long evenings he devoured Darwin and Wallace, though he

also read a good deal of history and biography. Like his father, he has often suffered under the imputation of not being widely read, possibly because he refrains in his speeches from the bad habit of excessive quotation.

By 1894 he had four white men in his employ and 800 negroes, and with this increase his responsibilities became even greater, as another extract from a letter shows:

Last week was one of the most severe I have ever had. On Friday, as if I had not enough to do otherwise, three schooners arrived with provisions and plants. Yesterday, as I had expected a heavy day's work, I told Arden to come and help me in the office, but early in the morning a vessel arrived with sisal leaves. From morn to dewy eve I toiled away, not even stopping for lunch. By common consent we never had so many people here before. Another schooner arrived full of plants, and a vessel from the south end of the island full of people who brought island produce to sell, and wished to buy American provisions. About 9 o'clock in the morning Cash came to me for whisky, saying he felt faint. I had to take him up to the house, and leave him there all the rest of the day unable to do anything. Knowles and his whole family went off in the middle of the day to recruit, and a little later Johnson, the circuit magistrate, came to pay me a visit. Of course being everywhere short-handed, the shop became absolutely packed. I had to go in myself, and lend a hand. We only served the bare necessities of life, and then shoved the people out by main force. Late in the afternoon another vessel came with leaf, and this morning yet another has come full of plants. The wharf was already piled high from end to end

and the carts must be used for taking out leaf which cannot wait. Is not all this enough to turn one's hair grey? That mine has not is attested by the fact that my cash balanced exactly last night in spite of innumerable entries and cross entries, additions and subtractions, heat, mosquitoes, and crowds of people.

Then, as always, Mr. Chamberlain threw on hard work, and when he came home to England, which he did for about three months every year, his friends were astonished to see how well he looked, in spite of the fact that he was out all day in a temperature of 140°, "stumbling and falling over the jagged pieces of coral rock, getting prickly heat one day and a septic leg from leaning against a poison tree another," as he described it. Conditions certainly became easier for him from the material standpoint, though the amount of work he had to do increased rather than diminished. In due course, after the construction of several miles of road, he even had personally to supervise the laying down of a tram-line. The tragedy was that all this effort was to no purpose. Sisal plants take five years to mature, and just as the plantation should have been coming into bearing, growth appeared to cease, and the plants began to turn yellow. What had happened was that the soil was too thin, and after a few anxious months it was obvious that Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's venture was a complete failure. His total loss was in the neighbourhood of £50,000, and coming on top of what he had lost in Argentina the blow was a very serious one. He bore it like a Stoic, and grieved more for his son than for himself: "It is hard upon him," he wrote to his wife, "even more than upon us."

Gibbon assures us that "the captain of the Hampshire grenadiers" was not "useless to the historian of the Roman Empire", and it is safe to say that the sisal plantation in the Bahamas was an admirable preparation for Downing Street. Mr. Chamberlain himself returned to England with the feeling that he had wasted the seven best years of his life, but in this case future good came out of present evil. It has already been suggested in an earlier chapter that his residence in the West Indies gave him a knowledge of the outlook of the overseas Empire which is denied to those who have never left the British Isles, and it also developed his character. The son of a great statesman is apt to find life both easy and pleasant in the West End of London, and thus to acquire an idea of his own importance which the facts may not warrant. Mr. Chamberlain, as the extracts from his letters show, was under no such temptation in the Bahamas, where hard work was the order of the day. Had some of his critics served a similar apprenticeship their careers might have been more profitable to themselves and to their country.

On his return to England he went into business in Birmingham. His commercial associations were with Elliott's Metal Company, the Birmingham Small Arms Company, and with the business, acquired from Messrs. Hoskin and Son, of manufacturing metal berths for ships. While his father and brother were playing a leading part in public life he took no great interest in politics, though, as if he had some foreboding of what might lie ahead, he both attended and spoke regularly at the Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society. In these days the man who as Prime Minister was to hold the House of Commons

in his hand was envious of his brother's fluency as an orator: "I envy Austen," he said. "He sits in an easy chair, reads a chapter or two of a novel, scribbles a note or two and goes to sleep—and his speech is made." It was, indeed, some years before he acquired the proficiency he now enjoys, but then it took even his father time to reach his zenith as a speaker. There is no better training-ground than a debating society, for it teaches a man how to deliver a crushing retort, and, what is at least equally important, how to keep his temper. In spite of a widespread belief to the contrary, Mr. Neville Chamberlain can be as cutting in a reply as was his father. Once when he was describing in the Commons the taxation on specific gravities of beer, Mr. Jack Jones interrupted: "That's not beer you're talking about—it's water." "I accept the hon. member's expert knowledge of water," replied Mr. Chamberlain, without a change in his expression, and then continued with what he was saying, ignoring the laughter he had raised.

Joseph Chamberlain was attracted to municipal politics by his interest in education, and in the case of his younger son it was his hospital work that caused him to take the plunge. He became chairman of the General Hospital and treasurer of the Dispensary committee, while he was also very active in connection with the Chamber of Commerce. When, in a provincial town of the civic patriotism of Birmingham, a man attains such a position he generally finds irresistible the pressure put upon him to become a member of the Council; of course, that is to say, if the local political leaders are awake to the necessity of continually strengthening municipal organization by enlisting fresh recruits. In the case of Mr. Chamberlain

there was naturally a general desire to secure the co-operation of yet another member of his family. In 1910 it was proposed to extend the city's boundaries, and at the inquiry ordered by the Local Government Board he gave evidence in support of the scheme. When the Board issued its Provisional Order, and the requisite Bill was introduced into Parliament he appeared as a witness before both the Lords' and Commons' committees. It was very reminiscent of the early days of his father's career.

When the extension scheme came into force in 1911 he consented to join the City Council. It was suggested that he should allow his name to go forward for an aldermanic vacancy, and thus save himself the bother of an election, but he characteristically declined: "If I am going to represent the ratepayers, I will be elected by the ratepayers." In due course he was returned for the All Saints' Ward, and his inclinations were attested by the fact that the two committees to which he asked to be appointed were the Health and Town Planning, neither of which was regarded by the ordinary councillor as of the first importance in a great city in pre-war days. Mr. Chamberlain was at once elected chairman of the Town Planning Committee, and his work in this capacity gave a lead to the whole country. As the law then stood such bodies were only allowed to draw up schemes for unbuilt areas, which meant that the operations of his committee had to be confined to the outskirts of Birmingham where development was not yet complete. This was not the sort of restriction to daunt a Chamberlain, and the city was marked out into sections: while most other municipalities had not advanced beyond the talking stage, Birmingham prepared, and secured official



THE BOO PREVIOUS.

SCENE: Theatre Royal, St. Stephen's. *Première of the new Problem play "Derailed."*

MANAGER NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN (*addressing hostile demonstrators in the Press Gallery after the opening scene*).
GENTLEMEN, I ADMIT THAT THIS PLAY IS UNEXCITING AND DEMANDS EXCEPTIONAL
VIGILANCE IN THE AUDIENCE; BUT IF YOU'LL SIT IT OUT PATIENTLY I CAN
PROMISE YOU A HAPPY ENDING."

Punch, November 21, 1928

Reproduced by permission of the Proprietors of "PUNCH"

approval for, the first two schemes sanctioned in this country for town planning in built-up areas. On the Health Committee the new councillor was equally active, and he was largely responsible for the provision which was made at that time for expectant mothers and for ante-natal treatment generally: this work was to a large extent carried on by voluntary clinics which were actively supported by the Health Committee. Those who talk about the Prime Minister's lack of imagination and of his austerity would do well to make themselves acquainted with his activities on the committees of the Birmingham City Council.

The year that first saw Mr. Chamberlain a councillor was also that of his marriage to Miss Cole, who came from an Irish sporting family. No event could have been more successful. Mrs. Chamberlain from the beginning did everything in her power to ease the burdens which began to accumulate on her husband's shoulders, and she has ever ensured that he should enjoy that Paradise of the busy public man, a restful home. She is always ready to play the part which Mr. Chamberlain's position may require of her, but she has never thrust herself forward, and she is the last woman to exult in her husband's success because of any glory it may reflect upon her. When the full story of Mr. Chamberlain's rise to power is written it will be surprising if one of his greatest assets does not prove to have been his wife. "No doubt," she said of him at Leamington in 1930, "he would never have gone into politics but for me."

In 1915 Mr. Chamberlain became Lord Mayor of Birmingham, an office which had previously been held by seven members of his family, that is to say his father, five uncles, and a cousin. The uncles were his

father's brother, Richard Chamberlain; William and George Kenrick; and Thomas Martineau and Charles Beale, of whom the latter was four times Lord Mayor. The cousin was Ernest Martineau, son of Thomas Martineau, who was in office when the war broke out, and who immediately left the city in command of one of its Territorial battalions. Mr. Neville Chamberlain held his father's exalted view of the dignity of municipal service, and in his new position he never spared himself. The Lord Mayor of a provincial city has more opportunities than the Lord Mayor of London of impressing his personality upon his fellow citizens, and of taking the initiative. Perhaps this is inevitable, but if in the provinces the duties of the position are arduous, they are less cut-and-dried. The Lord Mayor is *ex officio* a member of every committee of the Corporation, and Mr. Chamberlain made a habit of attending their meetings as far as possible, with the result that he was intimately connected with every aspect of the municipal work being carried out in the city. Nor was this the extent of his labours. He paid the closest attention to the work of the University, never allowed his interest in the hospitals to flag, and did everything he could to enable the normal life of the great city to be carried on in spite of the war, though the repercussions of the latter naturally took up a great deal of his time. The measure of Birmingham's gratitude was his reelection.

It was at this period that he began to attract attention for his financial ability, and perhaps the most important permanent feature of his mayoralty was the establishment of a War Savings Bank, which afterwards developed into the Birmingham Municipal

Savings Bank, the only institution of its kind in Great Britain. It arose in this way. When the War Savings Movement was inaugurated, Birmingham, in common with all other communities, was invited to establish a War Savings Committee. Strange to say the city had not hitherto possessed either a Trustee Savings Bank, a penny bank, or any similar institution, such as were in existence in nearly all the larger centres of populations. Mr. Chamberlain decided that now was the opportunity to remedy this state of affairs, and to establish a savings bank run by the municipality. Whitehall frowned on the idea, and could not see why Birmingham was not content with a War Savings Committee like every other town in England. Mr. Chamberlain, as was his wont, persisted, and in due course he gained his point. In 1916 he secured the passing of a bill, subsequently called the War Loan Investment Act, of which the object was to facilitate the investment, by means of Municipal Savings Banks, of savings in securities issued for the purposes of the war. Under this Act, which was due to Mr. Chamberlain's insistence, although he was not yet in the House of Commons, the Birmingham War Savings Bank was founded, and in 1919 a further measure was passed giving the Corporation permission to continue the bank as a permanent concern. In this way Birmingham became possessed of powers never granted to any other town. The success of this scheme may be judged from the fact that when the war ended the bank had £350,000 in deposits, while within ten years this figure had risen to over £7,000,000, and there were thirty-six branches.

The activities of a Lord Mayor, particularly in war-time, are so varied that space renders it impossible

to do justice to all Mr. Chamberlain's work during these years, but in view of the impression which his opponents endeavour to create of him as a hard business man, with no interests in life save balance-sheets, it may not be out of place to mention that while he was Chief Magistrate he worked hard to secure better civic opportunities for recreation, and also to make Birmingham the musical rival of Manchester by the formation of a permanent orchestra. The Lord Mayor had not submerged the young musician who played Mendelssohn and Beethoven to his father twenty-five years before. One other thing he did during his municipal career, he bought out the motor bus company. In practically all the great centres the trams were run by the corporation, and when the buses arrived the question of competition at once arose. The surplus on the trams went in relief of rates, and if, as in Glasgow, the buses smothered the tram service the ratepayers would be the sufferers. In Liverpool the late Sir Charles Petrie saw to it that from the start the buses did not compete with the trams, and Mr. Chamberlain followed the example of the Lancashire seaport. In the face of considerable opposition he made the buses a municipal concern as his father had made water and gas.

Mention must also be made of Mrs. Chamberlain's work as Lady Mayoress at this time. She took charge of an organization through which the widow and family, or other close relatives, of every Birmingham man who was killed were at once visited, and any immediate assistance they might require given them. She was, too, responsible for the office which sent about 100,000 garments and comforts of various sorts to the men at sea or at the Front, and fortnightly

parcels to the 800 local men who were prisoners in Germany. It may be said that any Lady Mayoress would naturally patronize such causes, which is true, but Mrs. Chamberlain did far more than merely allow her name to appear on notepaper-headings. She worked very hard herself, and she saw that the right people were selected for the tasks they were to perform, which is by no means always the case with charitable organizations: particularly was this so where visiting was concerned, and her discrimination in this respect made all the difference between success and failure. When the war came she had not been married long enough to be well known to the mass of the Birmingham people, but by the time it was over there never had been a Lady Mayoress who had so completely won their love and respect.

One day at the end of 1916 Mr. Chamberlain had been in London on municipal business, and had reached the station on his return to Birmingham, when he was overtaken on the platform by a messenger from Mr. Lloyd George, who had recently become Prime Minister, to say that he had been appointed Director of National Service. That was the way things were done during the war. The new Government wanted to impress the country at all cost that they were "getting on with the job". As Mr. E. C. Roberts put it in the *Outlook*: "Mr. Lloyd George had just superseded Mr. Asquith, and wanted to make a big 'gesture' to show the country that everything was now going to be changed. Hindenburg had been excogitating for some time a national service scheme, which incidentally was a failure. Mr. Lloyd George seized on the idea. The War Cabinet would found national service. A new department, a new Minister,

more labour to be found for industry, more men to be released for the army." Perhaps the best account of the creation of this new Department is that given by Sir William Robertson in his *Soldiers and Statesmen*:

For some time previously there had been, so I thought, close agreement between the new Premier and myself as to the needs of the Army, and the policy by which the requisite men could best be supplied. He was now in a position to give practical effect to that policy, as set forth in the Military Members' memorandum to which, as War Minister, he had given his approval. But, as with others before him, a change of office was accompanied by a change in point of view, and he allowed the defective man-power arrangements to drift on month after month without any adequate remedy until, in March, 1918, their amendment was compelled by the imminence of defeat.

The report of the committee appointed on November 30 to draw up the detailed scheme was considered by the newly formed War Cabinet on December 14, but in the absence of the Prime Minister no decision was reached. On December 19 statements on the general military and political situation were simultaneously made in both Houses of Parliament, and in relation to man-power Mr. Lloyd George announced that:

"The matter was considered by the War Committee of the late Government, and it was unanimously decided by them that the time had come for the adoption of the principle of universal national service. It was one of the first matters taken up by the present Government, and the War Cabinet have unanimously adopted the conclusions come to by the preceding War Committee."

Further explanations went to show, however, that the action he proposed to take was mainly confined to increasing the mobility of labour. The various industries were to be scheduled according to their national importance, and labour was to become liable to be transferred from one class of work to another, and also to some extent for employment in the Army. Men were to be "invited to enrol at once and be registered as war workers on lines analogous to the existing munition volunteers", and if the requisite numbers (whatever that expression meant) were not obtained by voluntary methods the Government would not hesitate "to ask Parliament to release us from pledges given in other circumstances, and to obtain the necessary powers for making our plans fully effective. The nation is fighting for its life, and it is entitled to the best services of all its sons". It was also announced that a Director-General of National Service had been appointed, who would be responsible both for the military and civil side of the scheme. These measures sounded courageous and promising, but in fact they were a poor substitute for universal national service, and made recruiting for the Army no better than it was before. The new National Service Department, from which much was expected, proved to be specially disappointing. Instead of being a unifier of competing interests, it became merely an additional department dipping into the pool of civil labour; and instead of allaying, it tended to increase the industrial discontent which prevailed.

That this took place was not the fault of Mr. Chamberlain. It might have been better had he never accepted the post, but an appeal to patriotism and public service in war-time is hard to refuse. To

quote Mr. Roberts again: "None the less, feeling that he must refuse no call to service, Mr. Chamberlain resigned his Lord Mayoralty, and settled down, with no instructions and many misgivings, to consider the random project allotted him. The object laid down was to get labour volunteers ready to do any work, wherever required, in place of further men to be taken from munitions, dockyards, mines, etc., for the army. The volunteers were to be got first, before it was known what work they were to do, while the Cabinet were making up their minds what men they should draft from industry." The doubt felt as to the utility of the new department was reinforced by the posters with which it decorated the hoardings, for the appeal was illustrated by a pair of hands, apparently of an old man long past any manual work, and resembling nothing so much as those of some aged prisoner outstretched through the bars of his cell in a final appeal for mercy.

Mr. Chamberlain stood this for seven months, and then, when he had been unable to get his suggestions adopted, he resigned. It was at once said, not always disinterestedly, that he had failed in his first national undertaking, and it is no use denying the fact that for some years this was remembered against him. For his part he had to keep silent, for it would have been against the public interest to have stated the situation in which, for reasons of political expediency, he had been involved. So he quietly returned to Birmingham, and resumed his work on the City Council. At the General Election of the following year he took the final plunge, and stood as a supporter of the Coalition for the Ladywood Division of Birmingham, where he was elected by a majority of nearly 7,000.

Few men have been so well qualified to sit in the House of Commons, for his experience had been of the most varied, as we have seen. Yet, like his father, he has never wanted for detractors from the moment he entered Parliament. His brother, for some inexplicable reason, was rarely subject to the attacks which were made on the other two Chamberlains, though his policy on occasion laid itself open to severe criticism. The cartoonists never seem to tire of representing Mr. Neville Chamberlain as having the air of a mean and callously fraudulent small tradesman, a travesty of the facts which is in the worst possible taste. However, his career is the best answer to such mud-slinging, and the man-in-the-street has treated it with the contempt that it deserves.

CHAPTER VIII

WESTMINSTER

When Mr. Neville Chamberlain, already in his fiftieth year, took his seat there were many who marked the external resemblance to his father, but there were few who realized how alike they were in character. At first the new member's personality did not impress. Tall, slim, with narrow, sloping shoulders, and a long, narrow head, he has a figure which recalls the great Colonial Secretary, and he is also like him in the fact that he has always appeared younger than his age. The House ere long come to realize that great flights of oratory were not in his line, and when the reaction set in against the Homes-for-Heroes type of speech, as it soon did, he was liked the better for it. The problems before the country were too serious to serve as catchwords for demagogues; they required treating in a businesslike manner, and here was the man who so regarded them. Quietly, but always immaculately, dressed, his appearance was that of the typical business man in politics. He had—and has—all his father's clarity in exposition, but his manner of delivery was very different, for his style is one more often met in the company board-room than on the political platform, being quiet and almost conversational; indeed, from the beginning of his Parliamentary career he showed himself more intent on making his meaning plain than on the use of telling phrases or rhetorical ornaments. His rare gestures

tell the same tale, for they indicate a desire for precision rather than any emotional stress. He emphasizes his points with the fingers of his left hand on the upheld palm of his right; at other times he puts his finger-tips together; and in the middle of a particularly involved argument he will grip the spring of his pince-nez delicately between his second finger and thumb. There neither is, nor ever has been, anything of the stump-orator about him.

The first Parliament in which Mr. Chamberlain sat is generally acknowledged to have been one of the least satisfactory of recent years. The period of its existence appears as anti-climax in comparison with that which had gone before. It is proverbially easier to die well than to live well, and the truth of the adage seemed to be proved. Whether the blame should be laid upon the leaders or the led, upon the politicians or the nation, it is a question that is not easy to answer, but that there was a general lowering of standards is undeniable. After the self-sacrifice of those four immortal years from 1914 to 1918 there was a sudden relapse into an every-man-for-himself attitude. The Government spokesmen talked about "a land fit for heroes to live in", only to be answered by their opponents that a man certainly required to be a hero to live in it. Compromise was, of course, essential in the difficult circumstances of the time, but it is not easy to resist the conclusion that it was pushed too far. There was compromise on principles, and this led to a frank opportunism, of which the evil consequences were to be felt for many a long day.

As good a description as any of Mr. Chamberlain's first Parliament is that of Mr. Lloyd George himself in Sir Austen's most charming book, *Down the Years*.

It was in the days of the Peace Conference, and Mr. Balfour (as he then was) said to the Prime Minister: "I have been an exile from England since Christmas. Tell me what is happening there. What, for instance, is the new House of Commons like?" "I'll tell you," said Mr. Lloyd George, his eyes sparkling with fun and a smile spreading rapidly over his face. "I made a speech to them. I addressed myself at first to the Opposition benches in front of me. They were very cold and hostile; I couldn't get a cheer. This, said I to myself, is not the House of Commons; it's the Trades Union Congress. So I turned as one does in such circumstances to the benches behind me, but neither was that the House of Commons; it was the Associated Chambers of Commerce."

Unfortunately the General Election of 1918 returned the Government with a strength at Westminster out of all proportion to the votes cast, and the Socialists, with a mere fifty-nine members, felt that they had been tricked. The Trades Union Congress began to set itself up against Parliament. "You," declared one of its delegates, "who have sprung from the loins of the common people are infinitely more representative of the aims and aspirations of this country than the House of Commons." A Council of Action was set up to enforce executive action in the interests of organized Labour. Mr. Arthur Bryant, in his monograph on Lord Baldwin, has selected some of the choicer specimens of the political abuse of that day. A leading organ of the Left, for example, reporting a speech of a member of the Coalition Government, began: "Mr. Winston Churchill of the Brass Face erupted again last Saturday," while that statesman himself talked of the foul baboonery of the extreme

Left. The late Lord Birkenhead advised the Conservative undergraduates of Oxford to throw their opponents into the river. Mr. George Lansbury wrote: "I see in every industrial centre of our country a growing mass of men and women becoming imbued with wrath and hatred, settling down to parasitical lives of indolence and ignorance, and I see the classes who wax richer and fatter each day by living on the labour of those workers who are permitted to toil. I see those rich and powerful ones engaged in the infamous business of driving those who work deeper and deeper into the bog of poverty—poverty that is of mind as well as of body—and over it all is the spectre of another and an early war which once again will call forth all the bitterness and hatred of which man is capable." An extreme view, perhaps, but one that was widely held.

The son of the man who had launched the "unauthorized programme" watched the strife with growing concern. He was not an old Parliamentary hand of pre-war days, who welcomed the Armistice as an excuse to get back to the party dog-fight. He had, it is true, come to Westminster relatively late in life, but he was in close touch with his fellow-citizens, and he knew what they were thinking. On the other hand, his brother had, since the retirement of Mr. Bonar Law, become leader of the Conservative Party, and was the chief lieutenant of the Prime Minister. So Mr. Chamberlain endured in a loyal silence, but there can be little doubt that he was glad when the end came. In the autumn of 1922 the Coalition fell after the famous meeting at the Carlton Club, and Mr. Bonar Law emerged from his retirement to become Prime Minister.

In the new administration Mr. Chamberlain

appeared as Postmaster-General, although he had never before held office at all. He had only been in Parliament for four years, so that his rise had been as rapid as that of his father, though he had to wait a little longer before he got into the Cabinet. His brother had followed Mr. Lloyd George, but in the circumstances his attitude was as friendly as that of his father had been towards Mr. Balfour's ministry nineteen years before. In a little over twelve months Mr. Chamberlain held four offices, for he was successively Postmaster-General, Paymaster-General, Minister of Health, and Chancellor of the Exchequer, though in this last capacity he was unable to introduce his Budget for Mr. Baldwin's first Government was defeated when it met Parliament after the General Election of 1923. It was manifestly impossible for a man changing so rapidly from office to office to have any influence upon policy, and Mr. Chamberlain does not pretend to have done so save in the matter of housing, but he acquired a good deal of very valuable information. Incidentally, it may be remarked that he was in no way responsible for the precipitate appeal to the electorate on the tariff issue.

When the Conservatives had won the General Election of 1924, Mr. Chamberlain returned to the Ministry of Health, and his old place at the Exchequer was taken by Mr. Winston Churchill. At once tongues began to wag in clubs and pubs. It was a deliberate slight; he had no ambition; he was out of the running for Prime Minister, and so on, but Mr. Chamberlain kept his counsel, and left it to time to confound his critics. He knew there was an immense amount of reconstruction to be done, and elections could not always be won on a "Red Letter", so he took a post

which was less spectacular than that held by his brother or Mr. Churchill. He proved right, for the solid achievements of that administration lay as much in the province for which he was responsible as in the domain of the Chancellor of the Exchequer or of the Foreign Secretary. Yet Locarno as such is a thing of the past; Mr. Churchill's Budgets are forgotten, though the brilliance with which he introduced them lives in the memory; but the houses that were built still remain, the widows' pensions are still paid, and the Local Government Act is still on the statute-book. What the father had made the Colonial Office, the son made the Ministry of Health, that is to say one of the most important posts under the Crown.

It has already been mentioned that housing was one of the few problems which Mr. Chamberlain had had time to tackle during those somewhat hectic fifteen months of his life that followed the fall of the Coalition. At the close of the war there was a shortage of houses which developed into a famine when the demobilized soldiers began to settle down. There were several reasons for this, of which the most important was, of course, the war itself; but Mr. Lloyd George's ill-fated scheme for the taxation of land values, which was included in the co-called "People's Budget", must bear some of the blame. Then there was the deterioration of buildings, and the rise in the standard of comfort demanded by the younger generation. When the war ended it was reckoned that there was a shortage of between 500,000 and 800,000 houses, apart from the annual need of 100,000 to meet the requirements of the normal increase in population and to take the place of those demolished.

The Coalition made "Homes for Heroes" one of its

slogans, and in 1919 it passed a Housing and Town Planning Act as an emergency measure. A programme of half a million houses was contemplated, and the Act gave a subsidy to local authorities, on the principle that the State should be responsible for the whole deficit in erecting houses, less the amount produced by a 1*d.* rate. This, it may be noted, provided no incentive to the local authorities to build cheaply, and it did nothing for the private builder; this latter fact was appreciated in due course, and a separate measure was thereupon passed giving him lavish subsidies too. The natural effect of these extravagant schemes was to send up the price so that with the increasing cost of the houses, and the heavy loan charges, the State's liability grew enormously. In the summer of 1921, the annual loss falling on the rates amounted only to £3 a house, but that for which the Treasury was responsible was £60. The price of building materials also soared under this stimulus; in January, 1921, the general increase over the pre-war level was 170 per cent, while in specific commodities the rise was as much as 400 per cent.

It soon became clear that the scheme had failed, and the Minister of Health, Dr. Addison himself, admitted that a house which in 1913 cost £250 to build was costing three to four times that amount. A departmental committee was set up, and this condemned the principle of the 1919 Act, calling, in the interests of economy, for a definite limit to be immediately fixed to the number of houses which were to be erected under this measure. Dr. Addison was replaced by the then Sir Alfred Mond, who wound up the scheme, and limited its operation to 176,000 houses already covered by approved tenders. The annual loss on each

Addison house is about £35 a year, and this will have to be borne by taxpayers and ratepayers for another forty years.

When Mr. Chamberlain became Minister of Health his task was thus to produce order out of chaos, and also to build the houses which were now required more urgently than ever. His solution of the problem was the Chamberlain Housing Act, of 1923, which had for its main object the stimulation of private enterprise with a view to reviving the building trade and accelerating the erection of houses. Accordingly a subsidy was provided both for houses built by local authorities and for those built by private enterprise, the existing facilities enabling local authorities to lend money to private individuals for house purchase were extended, and the work of the building societies was strongly supported. This last provision was particularly apposite under a Conservative administration, for by fostering the principle of private ownership, and giving thousands a stake in the country who never had it before, the building societies have since the war contributed more than any other institution to the establishment of stability, and they have formed the chief obstacle to the spread of Communism. Mr. Chamberlain definitely made his name as a statesman both by the details of this measure, and by the skill with which he piloted it through the House. That great Liberal organ, the *Westminster Gazette*, paid a remarkable tribute to him: "The conclusion of the Committee Stage on the Housing Bill had been made an appropriate occasion for bouquets to Mr. Neville Chamberlain on his success with his first important measure. Liberals equally with members of his own Party have joined in the tribute."

When Mr. Chamberlain returned to the Ministry of Health in Mr. Baldwin's second administration he devoted himself to the question once more. "If I have to sit up all night to do it," he said, "I will solve the housing problem before I leave the Ministry," and this proved to be no idle boast. Of course his experience in Birmingham stood him in good stead, and by the time that he left office in 1929 no less than 930,000 houses had been built, three-quarters of them by private enterprise. He also recommenced his father's onslaught on the slums, and during his tenure of office 121 schemes for slum clearance were approved in England and Wales, covering 15,000 properties and involving the rehousing of 75,000 people.

Mr. Chamberlain was also during these years to see his father's old projects of social insurance carried further forward by the Widows', Orphans' and Old Age Pensions Act, while his work in connection with the maternity services has been mentioned before in the course of this narrative, and also the personal reasons which so strongly roused his sympathies. "There is no service," he said, in the House of Commons in November, 1928, "to which I personally attach more importance, and in which I take a greater interest, than Maternity and Child Welfare, and I am not going to allow any consideration to interfere with the fullest possible development being afforded to it."

Soon after the Government went out of office he was asked what he regarded as his greatest legislative achievement and this was his reply:

The far-reaching effects of the Local Government Act of 1929 inclines me to regard it as the most important measure with which I have been con

nected during my Parliamentary career. The preparation of the Bill involved many weeks of concentrated effort as well as negotiations with all kinds of interested bodies. Clauses were drafted, and re-drafted, over and over again, and the conduct of the Bill required exceptional efforts of memory on the part of those responsible for it.

Of measures associated with my name, I should rank the Housing Act of 1923 as next in importance to the Local Government Act.

Though not a measure which made a popular appeal, I consider the passing of the Rating and Valuation Act of 1925 the most difficult Parliamentary achievement with which I have been associated, on account of its highly technical character and controversial nature.

Thoroughness and knowledge of a subject are qualities which, in my opinion, unquestionably make for success in Parliamentary life, and any success I may have attained in that sphere I attribute largely to my experience of local government. I can imagine no better training for a man desirous of making a career in the House of Commons than work on some local body.

Indeed, Mr. Chamberlain was so enthusiastic about his Local Government Bill that he wrote an article about it in the *Nineteenth Century*, and he is not one who readily rushes into print. The main points, according to its author, were as follows:

- (1) The abolition of the Boards of Guardians, and the transference of their powers and duties to the councils of counties and county boroughs.
- (2) The equalization of the charges for Poor Law

and highways over the area of the county or county borough.

(3) The institution of periodical reviews of county districts, and the consequent adjustment of their boundaries or form.

(4) The complete de-rating of agricultural land and buildings, and the partial de-rating of productive industry.

(5) The recasting of the financial relations between national and local resources, involving the substitution of an annual block grant, fixed over a term of years, for the previous haphazard arrangement of assigned revenue grants and certain other grants given on a percentage basis.

Commenting on the measure as a whole, Mr. Chamberlain thus concluded his article in the *Nineteenth Century*:

I am satisfied that its main features are sound and right, that it will at once simplify and strengthen the structure of local government, which was already beginning ominously to quiver, and that it will remain among the greater monuments of legislation, to mark the onward and upward march of our democratic and characteristically British system of local administration.

When his party went into Opposition the ex-Minister of Health found himself with more leisure at his disposal than he had known for a good many years, and he and Mrs. Chamberlain took advantage of the opportunity to pay a visit to Kenya, of which Sir Edward Grigg was then Governor. While they were there, on one occasion they were benighted in a mud pool, where their car stuck, and where they seemed

likely to remain until the morning had it not been for the resource of the wife of the game warden who was accompanying them. The rest from the cares of office also gave Mr. Chamberlain time to indulge in the sports of which he is so fond, namely fishing and shooting, and in ornithology, of which his knowledge is very extensive. Foreigners seem to find it odd that he has the inclination, even now when he is Prime Minister, to study birds, and to write notes on their habits in the Press. Such astonishment shows that they do not know very much about him, for behind the practical and efficient statesman there is the real lover of the country. In this he resembles a great many Englishmen, for a devotion to rural life is a national characteristic which foreigners never appear able to understand. Men as widely separated in time and outlook as Lord Bolingbroke, Mr. Disraeli, and Mr. Baldwin shared the same views on this point, and Mr. Chamberlain is but another example of the great men who prefer to tramp the fields in old clothes rather than stand at the head of a staircase ablaze with decorations. The Industrial Revolution may have urbanized England, but the link with the soil is unbroken so far as the heart is concerned, as may be proved by the flower-pots in the windows even in the meanest slum. In this Mr. Chamberlain shares the feelings of the mass of his fellow-countrymen, who like him the better for it.

Yet even in Opposition there was plenty of work to do. The Conservative leaders had decided that they could no longer be hampered by the pledge of 1924 not to introduce Protection, and there was much to do if the electorate was to be educated in the matter before the next election. In this task the son of Mr. Joseph

Chamberlain naturally took a prominent part. He put the case with that clarity which he had inherited from his father:

. . . In the circumstances of the modern world, when all our foreign customers have become our competitors, and when, having supplied their own needs, they are all dumping their surplus into this country at such cut-throat prices as their lower standards of work enable them to quote, we must have protection for our industries if we are to keep up our standards at all.

. . . We should propose to put a duty upon imported cotton goods. . . . But we are told that the cotton trade depends on export, and that if we have a tariff the foreigner will retaliate and raise the duties on our cotton. I want to know why we are always to put up with anything the foreigner does to us, and never hit back. People don't seem to realize that the British market is the finest in the world. We let foreigners come and sell in it to-day without paying a penny toll for the privilege. But they would much rather pay, and pay well, than go without the privilege altogether.

In the first National Government, which was formed in August, 1931, Mr. Chamberlain returned to his old place at the Ministry of Health, but when Mr. Snowden resigned after the General Election he became Chancellor of the Exchequer. This is not the place for an estimate of Mr. Chamberlain's work in restoring the nation's finances, and it will suffice to say that until the proposal for the National Defence Contribution in the spring of 1937 there was no serious criticism of his control of the Treasury: other aspects

of the Government's policy aroused opposition in this quarter or in that, but tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of electors supported the Administration because of the confidence they reposed in him. One reason for this was the absolute mastery which he clearly had over his subject: in this he resembled not only his father but also Mr. Bonar Law, whose capacity for memorizing masses of statistics was positively uncanny. In the Treasury itself he exercised, as has been said, a control which had not been known since the days of "Black Michael".

Undoubtedly from a personal point of view the greatest satisfaction which Mr. Chamberlain derived was from the fact that it fell to him to put into practice his father's Protectionist policy, and at the Ottawa Conference to meet the representatives of the Empire in council. Of the latter he said afterwards in the House of Commons: "Differing as the people of the Empire may in race, in religion, in colour, in language and in the conditions under which they live, yet there are certain aims and ideals which are common to all of them—ideals of peace, justice and freedom. . . . It must be to the advantage not only of ourselves but of the whole of humanity that the British Empire should grow in strength, in power, and in unity." What the final winning of the campaign for the tariff meant to those who had fought the long battle for thirty years can better be imagined than described; there were times, such as the General Election of 1906, when it seemed impossible that victory could ever be achieved, and to the three Chamberlains must go the greater part of the credit. I remember criticizing the Government on some point in, I think, 1933, to an old Tariff Reformer, and for a while he agreed with

me; but suddenly he interrupted, with a catch in his voice: "That's all very well, but don't forget they gave us the tariff." There was a generation of British history in the words.

Unhappily, while the domestic position steadily improved, the international situation became every day more overcast. In 1934 he had been able to claim: "While in other countries cuts in pay and reductions in social services are still having to be faced, while elsewhere the taxpayer is still searching in vain for any relief from his burdens . . . here, at any rate, we can feel that we have passed the worst, and can venture to remove a substantial portion of the load we have been carrying." These high hopes soon faded, and taxation once more had to be revised, but in the upward direction. When a Conservative Party Conference called for rearmament Mr. Chamberlain accepted the resolution, but only on condition that a rider was added to the effect that the meeting was willing to pay for it. Speaking at Glasgow on 14th October, 1935, he stated the position as it appeared to him:

I am not sure that this trouble we have been having for the last two or three months would ever have occurred if this country's Defence Forces had been stronger. We are satisfied that the time has come when we must speed up the pace again, and we must carry out that programme of replacement, repair, and the filling of gaps which we have already determined upon. We must carry out that duty in a much shorter time than we had contemplated. So we have made up our minds that we must embark on a new programme of defence. This is not a decision which can be very agreeable to a

Chancellor of the Exchequer. I have been labouring now for four years to build up again the structure of the national finances. . . . I say we do not want these forces for aggression; we do not intend to go any further than the absolute minimum which is necessary for our purpose, and we shall not relax our efforts to try to obtain some general agreement on disarmament.

Of course, we cannot expect to satisfy wholehearted pacifists like Mr. Lansbury who would have this country strip herself of all weapons of defence, whatever other countries were to do. Really, when a man comes to you and tells you that the best way of keeping out burglars is to leave all doors and windows open, well—he is past the stage at which you can usefully expect to reason with him.

When he introduced his Budget in May, 1936, he said that Disarmament had not succeeded because of a lack of security felt by other nations, which, without it, would not disarm. The Government believed its programme to be essential to the loyal pursuit of collective security, and that it was the consequence of deficiencies deliberately incurred in the past.

The Abyssinian crisis was leading Mr. Chamberlain, in common with the great bulk of his fellow-countrymen, to question much that they had previously taken for granted. He was coming to the conclusion that collective security in its old form was no longer practicable. Earlier in the year he had not yet abandoned hope, but in June he made his now famous speech at the 1900 Club Dinner. The truth is that, like his father, Mr. Chamberlain only came to concern himself with foreign policy when he was driven to it. His brother was the expert on that subject, and that

was enough. His own ministerial career would have been far removed from the international scene in normal circumstances, but the circumstances were far from normal, and he was forced to look out over the troubled world. The conclusions at which he arrived were to manifest themselves when he became Prime Minister.

Meanwhile it did not for some time appear likely that he would occupy the position. It was clear that Mr. MacDonald would not continue until the end of the Parliament, and that he would be succeeded by Mr. Baldwin: so much was obvious, but after that, what? Every name was canvassed, and for a few months Mr. Runciman was well in the running. Sir Samuel Hoare was another probable until the rejection of his arrangement with M. Laval, and there are some who think that had he, after his resignation, conducted a campaign in favour of his proposals, he might have made his succession almost inevitable. Sir Douglas Hogg was yet a third whose chances were good, but he went to the Upper House as Lord Hailsham. The strength of Mr. Chamberlain's position lay not only in his character, but also in the fact that he had emerged from the Indian controversy, almost alone of the Conservative leaders, without having trodden too heavily on the toes of those who disagreed with him. He, of course, supported the policy of the Government, but he did so without conveying the impression that he thought the ranks of his opponents were exclusively filled with fools and knaves. So it came about that when Mr. Baldwin resigned after the Coronation it was for this third great Chamberlain that His Majesty sent to be his Prime Minister.

It seemed to some that Mr. Chamberlain assumed direction of affairs at a time when his reputation was under a cloud owing to the fierce hostility roused by the National Defence Contribution, which it was subsequently found necessary to modify. Those who took this view were making a mountain out of a molehill. As so often, those who were not immediately affected were in the best position to appreciate the situation, and abroad the general feeling was one of admiration for Mr. Chamberlain's courage. Here, men said, was the answer to the charge that the British Parliament was a collection of puppets with the City pulling the strings. A statesman had arisen who was not afraid to face up to the powerful financial interests. The fact that the details of the scheme had to be re-adjusted in no way affected this judgment, and what has in some quarters been construed as a mistake on the part of Mr. Chamberlain has, on the Continent and elsewhere, enhanced, not only his reputation, but also that of the British system of government.

CHAPTER IX

PRIME MINISTER

The new Prime Minister succeeded in Mr. Baldwin one who was in many ways the antithesis of himself, and yet in spite (or was it because?) of that fact the two men had worked very well together for many a long year. Mr. Chamberlain was not the type of Cabinet Minister who is continually interfering in his colleagues' departments, and Mr. Baldwin left the members of his Cabinet to themselves—perhaps in some cases too much so. The time has not yet come to pass considered judgment on Mr. Baldwin as Premier, nor is this the place, but one or two observations must be made if the situation with which his successor was faced in the summer of 1937 is to be understood.

Mr. Arthur Bryant is perfectly justified in his contention that the ex-Prime Minister took the bitterness out of British politics, and it may be that posterity will consider this to be his chief title to fame. Fierce controversy is often a good thing provided the clash is one of opposing principles, but where the contest is between rich and poor, or threatens to become such, then danger lies ahead. In the previous chapter it has been shown how in 1923 all the violence of the years immediately preceding the war, combined with the contempt for law and order which that struggle had engendered in so many quarters, seemed to be coming to a head, and the outlook appeared gloomy indeed. Mr. Baldwin united the country, and

the measure of his success was the ease with which the nation passed through the dynastic crisis caused by the desire of King Edward VIII to make an unsuitable marriage. As Mr. Chamberlain had himself restored the national finances, when he became Prime Minister he found the internal situation as satisfactory as he could have wished, not only from the material, but also from the moral, standpoint. The spirit of the British people was excellent, and for this he had principally to thank his predecessor.

In foreign affairs Mr. Baldwin had been by no means so successful, and the international situation had gone from bad to worse. He gave the impression, perhaps wrongly, that he regarded the attitude of this country to the rest of the world as a departmental matter, and he only intervened in moments of crisis. *Corruptio optimi pessima*, in his most laudable determination to put the Premiership on its proper constitutional basis, and to effect a final break with the semi-dictatorial methods of Mr. Lloyd George, he sometimes went to the other extreme, and this was most noticeable in the field of foreign politics. It is admittedly by no means easy to say how much control a British Prime Minister should exercise over the members of his Cabinet, and precedents could be quoted in support of any theory. Disraeli had one or two able men in his ministry, whom he took into his confidence, and the rest were treated by him as the nonentities they were. The two Pitts and Walpole were autocrats, while Mr. Balfour only intervened between his colleagues in the last resort. Probably Gladstone and Asquith were the most successful in hitting the happy mean, though there is a good deal more to be said for the maligned Liverpool as Prime

Minister than is generally admitted, and Disraeli's sneering reference to him as the "Arch-Mediocrity" was wholly undeserved. In the case of Mr. Baldwin the explanation of his attitude is not difficult. In his second administration he had left everything to do with foreign policy to Sir Austen Chamberlain, and this had, as he probably felt, worked quite satisfactorily: when he became Prime Minister for the third time he was already ageing rapidly, the affairs of the Royal Family were occupying an increasing amount of his attention for one reason or another, and he not unnaturally adopted the same attitude as before. Admittedly this is a reason, rather than an excuse, for his behaviour, but it probably represents the facts of the case.

However this may be, the international situation could hardly have been worse when Mr. Chamberlain became Prime Minister, and to understand his difficulties it is necessary to examine it in some detail.

The origin of the trouble was the Italian campaign against Abyssinia, and for the complications of this it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the blame must be laid to no inconsiderable extent at the door of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. Just what M. Laval promised Signor Mussolini at the time of the Franco-Italian agreement in January, 1935, is uncertain, but all the evidence points to a free hand in East Africa. By the time that the Stresa Conference took place a few months later the intentions of Italy with regard to Abyssinia were clear, but no mention of the Negus or his dominions was made there in the conversations between principals. On the other hand there is every reason to suppose that Count Grandi, the Italian Ambassador in London, advised the Duce that official circles in England took a grave view of his projected

action, and the Italian dictator arrived at Stresa in the expectation that the British Prime Minister would raise the matter. Mr. MacDonald did nothing of the sort, and Signor Mussolini concluded that he had been misinformed. Rumour even said that the credit of Count Grandi in Rome had suffered in consequence. Whether or not this was the case, the Duce gained the impression that he could go ahead so far as Great Britain was concerned, and this accounted for much of the bitterness of himself and his fellow-countrymen when they discovered the real state of British public opinion. Mr. MacDonald by his courage in 1931 had deserved too well of his country to merit any hostile criticism, but had he displayed a little of the Chamberlain bluntness at Stresa a great deal of subsequent trouble might have been avoided.

Thereafter months were allowed to pass while Italian preparations were being hastily completed for all the world to see, and, as it seemed to the Duce and his people, without the prospect of any serious disapproval from Great Britain. Then came the war, and the imposition of Sanctions, in which this country played a leading part, dragging a reluctant France in her wake. There are two explanations of this: one is that Mr. Baldwin and his colleagues were really surprised at the lengths to which Italy was prepared to go, and that as convinced believers in the League of Nations and the doctrine of collective security they were determined to stop her; the other is that they were realists who wanted to expose the shame of Geneva in order to convince the British electorate of the necessity of immediate rearmament on a grandiose scale. Which of these interpretations is correct will probably not be known until the then Prime Minister

and Mr. Eden are both in their graves. In any event, the result was to terminate a period in the history of diplomacy which had lasted for fifteen years.

The Government and people of Italy blamed Great Britain for the imposition of Sanctions, and were almost wholly of the opinion that she was merely using the League of Nations as a convenient cloak to disguise her objection, which had a purely Imperialist basis, to Italian expansion in East Africa. Any suggestion that the British action was taken because of the liabilities imposed by the League Covenant was swept aside with the retort that London had not advocated Sanctions against Japan when the latter made an unprovoked attack on China. So, as the autumn of 1935 deepened into winter, relations between Great Britain and Italy became increasingly more strained, until it seemed that war might break out at any moment. There was an unprecedented concentration of British force in the Mediterranean, and every preparation was made for the outbreak of hostilities. The official view seems to have been that in the event of the latter Italy would be defeated in six to nine months, but that the whole resources of a disarmed British Empire would be required for the task, and the victors would suffer severe losses before they gained the day. If Germany came to the aid of Italy a very dangerous situation would arise, for Great Britain did not possess the armaments necessary to wage war in two principal theatres, such as the Mediterranean and the North Sea, at the same time.

Fortunately for the peace of the world neither the Sanctions nor the Abyssinians came up to the expectations which had been formed of them, and by the spring of 1936 it was clear that the existing machinery

was insufficient to preserve the independence of the Negus. There remained military Sanctions, that is to say war, but even in Great Britain, where the League found its strongest support, there was little enthusiasm for war. Still, the Sanctions were being continued, apparently for punitive purposes, and in view of the widespread anti-Italian feeling in the country it would clearly require an exceptionally courageous man to be the first to advocate their abolition. Mr. Chamberlain stepped into the breach. On 10th June he was the guest of honour at the annual dinner of the 1900 Club, and he took the opportunity to declare against the continuance of Sanctions. The effect was tremendous. An audience which represented the wealth and power of Great Britain cheered the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the echo, and next day it was clear that he had the support of the majority of his fellow-countrymen. Sanctions were dead. At the same time it should not be forgotten that Mr. Chamberlain was staking his eventual succession to the Premiership by taking this line, and with the fate of Sir Samuel Hoare before his eyes it was a particularly brave thing to do. Had public opinion not reacted in his favour he might well have been thrown to the wolves.

Unhappily, it was not to prove so easy to allay the bitter feelings which the Abyssinian conflict had roused. A large section of British opinion was violently hostile to Italy for what she had done, and an even larger section for the way she had done it. In Italy there was universal exasperation with the attitude which had been adopted by Great Britain, and after the conquest of Abyssinia it became mixed with a contempt which augured ill for the future relations of the

two countries. Italians felt that the British Government had done everything in its power to prevent their victory, and had failed. Such being the case it was clear that time, and the absence of fresh provocation, were necessary to allow tempers on both sides to cool. As it turned out, this was exactly what did not happen, for the Spanish civil war came to exacerbate the bad feeling, and Anglo-Italian relations were still in an extremely unsatisfactory condition when Mr. Chamberlain became Prime Minister twelve months later.

At first sight it is by no means obvious why civil wars in Spain should always prove of such vital concern to this country, but the reason is that other Powers invariably display a desire to participate in them, and given the geographical position of the Peninsula in such circumstances Great Britain cannot remain indifferent. In the present instance the situation has been complicated by a clash of ideologies. Fascists and Nazis on the one hand, and Communists on the other, see, or profess to see, in the two parties struggling for mastery in Spain their own co-religionists, and have consequently rushed to the aid of one side or the other. It is in this that lies the danger to the peace of the world. The situation is almost exactly comparable with that during the religious wars in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There is the same bastard internationalism which prefers a foreigner of one's own way of thinking to a fellow-countryman who has other views, and there is the same cloaking of purely material and Imperialistic ends under a pretence of high-souled idealism. So far as unhappy Spain is concerned the parallel can be carried even further, for, like Germany during the Thirty Years' War, she has

become the testing-place for the latest military and political theories.

This situation could not have come into being at a more unfortunate moment, for the Powers were already in process of aligning themselves on a pseudo-ideological basis. The *Front Populaire* in France had accepted with joy the legacy of the Soviet Pact, while the friendly attitude of Germany during the Abyssinian war had resulted in the formation of what came to be known as the Rome-Berlin axis. Europe was rapidly splitting up into two camps, divided by what both sides believed to be the wide gulf of principle.

Mr. Baldwin had realized the implications of all this, and also the necessity of a lightning-conductor of some sort. So far as the latter was concerned, the League of Nations was the natural instrument for the purpose, but Germany was no longer a member, while Italy viewed Geneva and all its works with the gravest suspicion and disfavour. Therefore the Non-Intervention Committee came into existence in London under the chairmanship of Lord Plymouth, and although its meetings were often marked by an exchange of vitriolic abuse this was better than an enlargement of the Spanish war into an international conflict. It is true that the Great Powers assisted those in the Peninsula whom they considered to share their ideological conceptions, but as they were pledged to non-intervention ordinary decency demanded that they should only intervene actively on a modest scale. Great Britain alone kept both to the letter and to the spirit of her undertaking, and she became unpopular with both parties in consequence.

Such was the position when Mr. Chamberlain became Prime Minister, and it was not rendered any

easier by the attitude of the Opposition at home. Ninety-nine people out of a hundred in Great Britain had no desire that their country should be involved in the Spanish war, and warmly supported the official policy of rigid non-intervention. Most of them sympathized with one side or the other, but they did not consider either General Franco or his opponents worth the bones of a single British soldier. If the Nationalists win, they argued, some form of Fascism will probably be the result; if Valencia triumphs, then Spain will go Red: as England is neither Fascist nor Communist, she is not particularly interested. Any threat to British interests would be another matter, but rearmament was proceeding apace, and the future could be left to look after itself. This may not have been very heroic, but it represented the standpoint of the man-in-the-street as soon as the Coronation festivities were over and he had time to read the foreign news once more.

The Socialist Opposition, however, took a different line, and it would be unjust to say that they did so for any selfish reason. They seem to have been honestly convinced that what was taking place in Spain was a conflict between right and wrong, and that their own Government had deliberately chosen to play the part of a Gallio. Certainly they imbued their followers with this belief, for to the Socialist hecklers at National Government meetings Spain became a perfect obsession. At first it seemed as if this attitude must have been dictated by electoral considerations, but the byelections soon proved the contrary. In constituency after constituency, whether industrial, residential, or rural, the voters showed that they had no use for the Socialist policy, and that they had the fullest confidence

in the new Prime Minister: indeed, the Opposition was to no small extent responsible for presenting the latter with a triumph at the polls such as is given to very few Premiers on first taking office. Nevertheless, Mr. Attlee and his colleagues were in no way deterred by this series of disasters, and they were prepared to face with equanimity the loss of that Irish Roman Catholic support which in many of the urban areas had been a tower of strength to them for two decades. If the Socialist leaders were not sincere, then they were fools, and no one has ever suggested that. As for the ordinary citizen, he was confirmed in the opinion which he had held since 1931, namely that the Opposition was quite unfit to govern the country.

At home, this attitude made the Prime Minister's task a great deal easier, but abroad the opposite was the case, for the intemperate language used by Opposition speakers in Parliament, and by the Opposition Press, rendered negotiation with other countries extremely difficult. Day after day Herr Hitler, Signor Mussolini, and General Franco were assailed with the foulest abuse, which the Press at their disposal naturally returned with interest. In view of the fact that the Spanish civil war had broken out at a time when the international situation was already very strained in consequence of the Abyssinian crisis, the effect of these tactics was extremely serious. The enemies of England all over the world seized their opportunity to cite these wild statements in support of their contention that her neutrality was a farce, and they found widespread acceptance for their allegation. Mr. Chamberlain was from the first alive to this danger, and in a notable speech in the House of

Commons he deplored the shouting which might well precipitate an avalanche, but his warning fell on deaf ears so far as the Opposition was concerned.

On the other hand Mr. Chamberlain enjoyed one great advantage over his immediate predecessors in that the country was at last looking to its defences, and the British Empire was no longer, as Lord Lloyd so aptly put it, "the biggest mass of unprotected plunder the world had ever seen." The impotence of the League at the time of the Italo-Abyssinian War had pointed the moral of Stratford Canning's advice to the Foreign Office of his day: "The extreme desire for peace, if care be not taken, may bring on the danger of war." Once again, as on the morrow of so many previous conflicts in the past, it had been shown that a Britain stripped to the skin could make no effective contribution to the peace of the world in a Europe armed to the teeth. Mr. Chamberlain, therefore, was able to speak with far more authority since he had behind him a people whose armed might was soon to be commensurate with their place among the nations. Such had been the position when his father made his famous retort, quoted above, to the German Chancellor, but Sir Austen had been in a very different situation during the years that he was Foreign Secretary. Internal unity and adequate armaments are essential if a nation is to take the lead in international counsels; Great Britain possessed the one, and was in a fair way of acquiring the other, when Mr. Chamberlain became Prime Minister.

Home Politics were not fated to be his immediate concern, but a word or two must be said as to the reshuffle of the Cabinet, for which Mr. Chamberlain had

to endure some rather misdirected criticism from some quarters. He kept, as will be recollected, nearly all his predecessor's ministers, though in more than one instance he appointed them to fresh offices, and he put Lord Winterton at the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster. Experience may render necessary the retirement of one or two of the present ministers, but it would have been a mistake to have made any sweeping changes when the new Cabinet was formed. The country had been through more than enough during the past eighteen months, and a care for the national interest demanded that the succession of Mr. Chamberlain to Mr. Baldwin should be effected as smoothly as possible. Had new men been brought into the ministry, and old men been left out, tongues would have started wagging, and the wildest rumours would have been flashed from capital to capital. There would be plenty of time for reconstruction when the new Prime Minister had got into his stride.

In this connection it is not without interest to remember the views of his father, who, if it never fell to his lot to form a Cabinet, had plenty of experience to guide him as to the way in which one was generally formed. "The first half-dozen appointments," said Joseph Chamberlain, "are obvious, and nearly all the others settle themselves without any great difficulty: then there is one last vacancy; shall it go to X or Y? Their claims are equal, but X is much more easy-going, and if he is left out won't cause a great deal of trouble in the House, whereas Y might easily prove a serious nuisance, so the vacancy goes to Y. Then you discover that you have misjudged your men, and X becomes a veritable thorn in your side."

Mr. Chamberlain had hardly taken office before he

gave evidence of the fact that he had considered the international situation very carefully indeed. He realized that while, in the twilight of the League, a balance of power on the mainland of Europe was probably very much to the interest of Great Britain, it would not be to her advantage were the two parties to represent opposed ideologies. For various reasons this country had seemed to have become identified with France and Russia in opposition to Italy and Germany. The difficulty was—and is—that Paris is on the way from London to Geneva, and unless British statesmen wish to be deliberately rude to the French, they are bound to break their journey, if only for lunch. At once the most sinister interpretation is put on this (sometimes, one suspects, at the instigation of the Quai d'Orsay), and the dove-cots of Rome and Berlin are fluttered in consequence. It is said that once Sir Austen Chamberlain and M. Briand were discussing some knotty point on which they did not see eye-to-eye, when the Frenchman looked at the clock, and noticed that it was long past his usual luncheon hour: he thereupon suggested to Sir Austen that they should adjourn for that meal, to which the other readily assented. As they came out of the room, M. Briand said to the assembled journalists: "Sir Austen and I are agreed." So they were—to have their lunch. In such ways do international misunderstandings arise.

Mr. Chamberlain's approach to the problems of Europe was reminiscent of Mr. Asquith's tribute to his father's memory, for he displayed "a freshness of outlook, a directness of purpose, and a certain impatience of conventional and circuitous methods". In consequence of the resignation from the League of Germany and Japan, and the continued abstention of Italy from

its discussions, Geneva had ceased to be a convenient meeting-place for the Powers, and had, in effect, become mainly a club for those who did not approve of dictatorships. The Prime Minister soon came to the conclusion that the first step to be taken was an improvement of the atmosphere, and he very courageously made a sympathetic reference to Germany in the House of Commons which was greatly appreciated in Berlin. With regard to Italy, the friendly understanding which had been reached earlier in the year had not, as we have seen, achieved the desired result, and so Mr. Chamberlain sent a personal message of goodwill to Signor Mussolini. Years before, Mr. Baldwin had said: "It is that cursed and diabolic suspicion between man and man and nation and nation that robs Europe of that sense of security that is essential to the unity of spirit which we must have before the world can function aright." Mr. Chamberlain was determined that it should be no fault of his if that suspicion was not removed.

It was unfortunate that the Nyon Conference in September (1937) should have intensified, rather than alleviated, the crisis, and the blame for this must rest with Russia. Her rulers felt that something must be done to restore their prestige, reduced as it was almost to vanishing-point by the repeated executions of their opponents, and the readiest method seemed to them to be to convert the Nyon Conference into a court-martial on Italy. The first thing to do was to prevent the latter's attendance, and this was achieved by the presentation at Rome of two insulting notes: the Italians very foolishly played into the Russian hands, and stayed away, which was exactly what Moscow wanted. However, Mr. Chamberlain saw to it that

Great Britain did not become a partner in the Franco-Soviet Pact, which was the Russian manoeuvre, and acting on his instructions Mr. Eden made no reference to general politics, but confined himself to the subject for which the Conference had been summoned, namely the suppression of piracy in the Mediterranean. The latest attempt to implicate Great Britain in the Spanish civil war, and to embitter her relations with Rome and Berlin, had failed.

What are the principles upon which the Prime Minister is basing the foreign policy of his Government? In order that there should be no misunderstanding on the point he laid them down explicitly in a speech in Scotland on 12th November, 1937:

The foreign policy of this Government has, of course, to deal with many situations in different parts of the world, and the particular application of that policy must be fixed, must be adapted, to meet the actual conditions which it finds. I think one may say that all through it is guided by certain general principles, and among them I would name these. First of all the protection of British interests and the protection of the lives of British nationals; secondly, the maintenance of peace and, so far as we can influence it, the settlement of differences by peaceful methods and not by force; and, thirdly, the promotion of friendly relations with other nations who are willing to reciprocate our friendly feelings, and who will keep those rules of international conduct without which there can be no security or stability in this world.

A few days before, at the Guildhall, Mr. Chamberlain had dealt with the matter a little more fully, and

before proceeding to a consideration of what he has done, it will be as well to see what he set out to do.

In this speech he covered, as is usual on such occasions, a very wide field. In a brief reference to the conflict in the Far East he said: "In our view an essential for success in any endeavour to bring about a settlement is the co-operation of the United States, whose influence and interests in the Far East are so considerable." Passing to the Spanish war he observed that perhaps the only satisfactory aspect of the history of this affair from our point of view has been the close collaboration with the French Government which we have enjoyed throughout. From this he went on to mention "our relations with the two great Powers which are now so closely associated in what is known as the Rome-Berlin axis":

It is the sincere desire of His Majesty's Government to see those relations firmly established on a basis of mutual friendship and understanding, which should not in our view be affected by differences in methods of internal administration.

An understanding, however, could, he felt, better be reached "by informal discussion than by public declamation".

The Socialist Opposition had attacked the Government because there was no reference to the League of Nations in the King's Speech. The Prime Minister dealt with this criticism:

There are apparently some people whose faith in the League is so shallow that unless they keep repeating its name aloud at frequent intervals they feel themselves liable to forget all about it. The faith



THE MONEY GOES ROUND AND AROUND.

THE MERRY CHANCELLOR. "NOW THEN, DON'T STAND SHIVERING THERE—DANCE AND KEEP UP YOUR CIRCULATION."

Punch, April 15, 1936

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of His Majesty's Government goes deeper than that. To us the League is not a fetish, but an instrument, the value of which is in direct proportion to its effectiveness.

At the present time its effectiveness is seriously impaired because some of the most powerful nations in the world are not members, or are not in sympathy with it. Even so, it still does much useful and valuable work, but our aim must be to strengthen its authority, and thus so to increase its moral and material force as to enable it to carry out fearlessly and successfully the purposes for which it was originally founded.

His peroration reminded the older members of his audience of his father's greatest days:

What sort of future are we trying to create for ourselves and for our children? Is it to be better or worse than that which we have inherited? Are we trying to make a world in which the peoples that inhabit it shall be able to live out their lives in peace of mind and in the enjoyment of a constantly rising standard of all that makes life worth living, of health and comfort, of recreation and of culture? Or are we preparing for ourselves a future which is to be one perpetual nightmare, filled with the constant dread of the horrors of war, forced to bury ourselves below ground and to spend all our substance upon the weapons of destruction?

One has only to state these two alternatives to be sure that human nature, which is the same all the world over, must reject the nightmare with all their might, and cling to the only prospect which can give them happiness. And for any Government deliberately to deny to their people what must be their

plainest and simplest right would be to betray their trust, and to call down upon their heads the condemnation of all mankind.

I do not believe that such a Government anywhere exists among civilized peoples. I am convinced that the aim of every statesman worthy the name, to whatever country he belongs, must be the happiness of the people for whom and to whom he is responsible, and in that faith I am sure that a way can and will be found to free the world from the curse of armaments and the fears that give rise to them, and to open up a happier and a wiser future for mankind:

In Faith and Hope the world will disagree,
But all Mankind's concern is charity:
All must be fate that thwart this one great end;
And all of God, that bless Mankind or mend.

In the period that has elapsed since these declarations of policy the Prime Minister has not let the grass grow under his feet in the matter of performance. He is one of the few British statesmen of the present day who are able to see the country's problems as a whole, and he realizes that they are so interwoven that they cannot be isolated from one another. It is, for example, quite out of the question to intervene in the Far East save in collaboration with the United States. Mr. Chamberlain is therefore doing everything in his power, like his father of old, to foster friendly relations with that great country. At the same time he is too well acquainted with American opinion not to be aware that any forcing of the pace from this side would have an effect the opposite of what is desired, and he is very wisely making a beginning in the economic sphere.

The visit of the French Prime Minister to London at the end of November gave rise to the widest speculation, but it was a perfectly natural occurrence. Lord Halifax had recently returned from Berlin, and M. Chautemps wanted to know what he had heard there. Those who would have had Mr. Chamberlain come to terms with Germany behind the back of France were imagining a vain thing. To sacrifice an old friend for the sake of placating an old enemy is very shortsighted policy as well as extremely caddish behaviour. There can be no peace in Europe worth the name on such a basis. It remains, at the moment of writing, to be seen whether an agreement with Germany is possible, but if it is it will not be at the price of sacrificing others—a course which would lose us the few friends in the world whom we still possess. Mr. Chamberlain is wiser than his critics, and he has to guide him the memory of his father's dealings with Germany at the turn of the century. Nor will he consent even to discuss any German request for Treaty revision save as part of some scheme of general pacification. A policy of sops does not appeal to him, and he knows that paying Danegeld does not get rid of the Dane.

With Italy it does not seem that an agreement will be at all easy of attainment, for Signor Mussolini appears much less desirous of the friendship of Great Britain than does Herr Hitler. Yet it will not be the fault of Mr. Chamberlain if Anglo-Italian differences are not found capable of adjustment, for he has done everything in his power to improve the position, but so far, it must regretfully be admitted, without evoking much response in Rome. One thing he is determined to avoid at all costs, as he made quite clear in his

Guildhall speech, and it is that British foreign policy shall be influenced by any ideological considerations. If the nations were to line up on that basis, as some fanatics wish them to do, then the future of the British Empire would be gloomy in the extreme, for it would be called upon to tackle at one and the same time Germany, Italy, and Japan. There is no fear of such madness while Mr. Chamberlain remains at the helm. It is his view that how the Germans, Russians, and Italians govern themselves is their affair, so long as they do not seek to impose their systems of government upon us. In short, British interests, not abstract ideologies, are to be the foundations of the nation's foreign policy under his Premiership. As he has himself put it:

It appears to be the fashion in some quarters to decry any allusion to material interests as if they were sordid considerations unworthy of the attention of a great people. I should be the last to suggest that we should exclude from our minds all thoughts of moral and spiritual aims, or that we should occupy ourselves solely with selfish endeavours to improve our material prosperity at the expense of other people's. But is there not a danger of running to the opposite extreme?

After all, the political, financial, and economic stability of this country, and of the associated peoples of the British Commonwealth, is one of the most important factors in the general well-being of the world. In endeavouring to preserve that stability we are doing no injury to others, but on the contrary we are making a contribution, the value of which can hardly be over-estimated, to the preservation of the confidence and security of all.

Of one thing there can be no doubt, and it is that

the Prime Minister will not take any step forward until the ground has been most carefully prepared in advance. This characteristic of his father and brother is shared by him. No one need fear that the active participation of the Head of the Government heralds a return to the hectic diplomacy of the immediately post-war period.

It has been claimed for Mr. Chamberlain on an earlier page that he has the gift of seeing the country's problems as a whole, and this means he fully realizes that if a nation is to be effective abroad it must be strong at home. The connection of the Chamberlain family with British industry now goes back several generations, and so the Prime Minister, in addition to being a business-man himself, has a special claim to be heard when he speaks of the relations between the State and private enterprise, for he can look at the problem from the point of view of both parties as well as of the past. In October, 1937, he laid down at Manchester the basic principles of his industrial policy:

In the old days, when things were much easier than they are now, we all put up with a good deal of inefficiency in industry, and the business-man of that day was an individualist. He did perhaps sometimes interfere with other people, but he particularly disliked any interference with himself by anybody else, and particularly by the Government. He considered that politics was rather a degrading business in which he wished to have no part. As for the State, that was really only an abstraction.

That is a striking contrast to the attitude of responsible men in business to-day. They feel that their responsibility does not end with the concern

in which they are engaged, but that they have a responsibility also to their country, and although they may have no party politics they are entitled to the name of statesmen in so far as they actually serve the State.

Perhaps that is the secret of the success of democracy in this country, and as long as that continues to be the case we may be satisfied that our institutions are in no danger. We are now in the presence of a competition from States where the whole people have willingly given up their liberty in order to secure efficiency. To us the loss of that liberty would out-weigh all the advantages that might be gained in others ways, but, all the same, I do not think we need fear the competition, provided we use our liberty wisely.

That does not mean that we should base ourselves on the principle of each for himself and the Devil take the hindmost, but that we should rather encourage each individual to follow out his own initiative, subject always to a due regard for the rights and liberties of others.

These thoughts are very much in accordance with the views of his father when the latter declared that the common aim should be "not every man for himself, but each for all". At the conclusion of his Manchester speech the Prime Minister returned to the subject:

I have pointed out that the relations between the State and industry tend all the time to grow in intimacy and complexity. I welcome that fact which I believe to be valuable for industry and the country generally. Broadly speaking I would say that the proper function of government in relation to industry is to create the conditions for trade and

commerce to be most successfully carried out, only exercising so much control as may be necessary in the public interest.

That has been the aim of the National Government from the beginning. By the restoration of financial stability, by the introduction of a moderate tariff combined with Imperial preference, and by the conclusion of a number of commercial agreements, I think I may claim that we have not been unsuccessful. We have our critics, especially those who can see no middle shade between black and white; but the longer I live the more it seems to me clear that every important decision arises out of a balance of opposing considerations, and that much of the art of statesmanship lies in finding a true balance.

This doctrine is the logical outcome of Tariff Reform, and it is also, which is not so generally recognized, sound Tory philosophy. Once the State has turned its back on Free Trade, and has imposed duties in order to stimulate industry, it automatically acquires a right to some say in the control of the latter in the interest of the ordinary citizen. Save by a few extreme individualists, this right is generally admitted, but what is in dispute is the extent of State interference. The Tory cannot deny the right of the State to interfere, but it is his duty to see that the scales are not unduly weighted against the individual.

When Mr. Chamberlain became Prime Minister he by no means lost his interest in the subjects which had occupied so much of his time when he was at the Ministry of Health. If prestige abroad depends on strength at home, the latter can only be secured by neglecting nothing which may contribute to the health

of the people. Nor is it an impersonal question, as Mr. Chamberlain showed in a speech last September:

. . . We must think not of the national health as an impersonal abstract thing, but of the people who compose the nation—the fathers and mothers who carry the responsibility of bringing up a family, but to whom, unless they have health, that responsibility may become an intolerable burden.

There are also the young people who are just starting in life and to whom bad or good health means weariness and pain, or that sense of power which is in itself an active enjoyment; and the small children who are at that critical stage when neglect of some simple precaution or some mistake in diet may handicap them all the rest of their lives.

There spoke the humanity of a man to whom this virtue is denied by his critics. In his concluding remarks Mr. Chamberlain addressed himself to the local government officials who formed the greater part of his audience:

As an old local government administrator, with a very vivid recollection of how closely the work on which you are engaged brings you into touch with the daily life of the people, I am sure you realize how large a part the presence or absence of full physical health and vigour plays in their happiness. Health counts for far more than wealth. Disease or physical weakness lowers the spirits and undermines the temper. The greatest blessing we can confer upon the community is to save them from the disabilities that bear down the man or woman whose body is a constant source of suffering or discomfort.

In these speeches Mr. Chamberlain laid down the principle upon which the policy of his Cabinet rests in Imperial, foreign, and domestic affairs. Even those who do not agree with the conclusions at which he arrived must admire the clarity with which his arguments are expressed, and the sober realism of which they contain such convincing evidence. The Prime Minister is assuredly not one "that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge", and his programme, based upon very extensive knowledge indeed, will be implemented in due course. We are not, in this country, given to boasting, particularly about what we are going to do, or we should be talking about the "Chamberlain Plan". Mr. Chamberlain is, it cannot be too often repeated, one of the few British statesmen to realize the inter-dependence of the problems by which the country is faced to-day. He appreciates the fact as clearly as the dictator of any totalitarian state, but he proposes, hundred per cent Englishman that he is, to use the old traditional English methods to overcome all difficulties.

Enough light, it is hoped, has been thrown upon the character of Mr. Chamberlain to show that the impression of him which exists in certain quarters is very far from the truth. Perhaps his most prominent characteristics are loyalty and courtesy. He never forgets an old friend or supporter, and he keeps a promise very religiously indeed. If he says he will do a thing he does it, and only vital matters of State will keep him away from any function, however relatively unimportant, that he has promised to attend. Like all his family he hates to give even the appearance of letting anyone down. A few months ago he accepted an invitation to meet a number of his younger supporters

at dinner in London, and when the appointed day arrived he was only just recovering from an attack of his old enemy gout. It would have been quite reasonable had he decided to remain at home: yet he came to the dinner all the same, stayed until a comparatively late hour, and never gave the slightest indication, save the employment of a stick, of the discomfort which he was suffering. Mr. Chamberlain possesses the happy knack of making a young man feel at ease in a few minutes, and of persuading him to talk of the things in which he really takes an interest. It is not a common gift, and it has been rare in leaders of the Conservative Party. There is nothing stiff or pompous about him, and he is always ready to hear what another has to say, making no attempt himself to monopolize a conversation.

Probably the greatest impression produced by Mr. Chamberlain upon one who has not met him before is his truly remarkable skill in going to the root of any problem which he is discussing. He seems to do this almost by instinct, whether or not he has any previous knowledge of the subject under discussion. If ever there was a man who could "cut the cackle and come to the 'osses", it is he. It is the practical aspect of a question that appeals to him, and he has little use for the theorists who are divorced from reality. He can in a few sentences strip a problem of all that is incidental, so that in a minute or two one is down to its basic facts, but he never makes the mistake, not uncommon in Englishmen, of assuming that an analysis is a remedy.

Not long ago Mr. Chamberlain referred to Scotland as the "country to which I am accustomed to repair for my own little private keep-fit movement". He goes

there, as is generally known, for fishing, and he also fishes from time to time on the Test and in Devonshire. He is a remarkably strong fisherman, and at the end of the day is quite ready to continue when men ten years his juniors are thoroughly exhausted. Shooting is another of his pastimes, but it comes second to fishing. His days in the open air do him the more good in that he has the power to leave the worries of public life behind him when he goes out for a day's sport. Mr. Chamberlain is not the man to have a sheaf of telegrams following him into the butt or down to the river-bank. If affairs of State are pressing he is always ready to forgo his holiday or to interrupt it, as he did twice last summer: otherwise he forgets them for the time, and it is thus that at the age of sixty-eight he is as active as any man of fifty.

Lastly, the Prime Minister is a keen ornithologist, and he has more than once recorded his observations in the Press. The following notes, which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* on 8th August, 1936, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, well illustrate his interest in bird-life:

A short time ago people were interested to read of a starling in St. James's Park which had learned to imitate the cry of the kestrel, and thereby frightened the sparrows into the bushes. Quite a number of birds occasionally mimic others; this is an account of an instance that came under my notice.

One of the pleasantest features of No. 11 Downing Street is its outlook on the old L-shaped garden that lies between it and the Horse Guards Parade, with its ancient shaded wall, its marvellous turf, and its venerable ilex and hawthorn. When I came

to it first, it was mid-winter; the trees, save the ilex, were leafless, the birds silent. Yet it was pleasant to look on, and full of promise.

As, later in the year, the spring brought up the sap, and the green began to show in the tips of the lime-buds, the first sound that came through the open window of my bedroom in the morning was the song of a thrush. Hey! Ho! Hey! Ho! he sang so joyously and vigorously that his exuberant spirits were infectious, and I got into the habit of listening for him in the daytime as well as in the early morning.

It was only after a long time that I began to remark to myself that never had I heard a thrush put so little variety into its song. Thrushes generally repeat notes, often many times in succession, but then they will break off and improvise. This fellow seemed to have nothing more to say than his Hey! Ho! Hey! Ho! exhilarating as he made them sound.

Could it, I wondered, be a missel thrush? But no! there was none of that piercing, breathless phrasing of the storm-cock. This was clearly and decidedly a song thrush.

Often, curiously enough, the opening notes were followed by the unmistakable mellow drawling whistle of a blackbird. But it was only gradually that the truth dawned across me.

I had never seen a thrush in the garden, though blackbirds were often on the lawn, and sometimes came to drink at my bird-bath. Could this be a blackbird which had picked up those two notes from a thrush singing in St. James's Park? I determined to solve the mystery by observation, but I had to wait long before I could find an opportunity.

At last, one week-end in July, when I had to be

in London, I was working in my room when I heard the well-known cry. I ran into the garden: the bird was concealed in the thick foliage of a plane tree by the Foreign Office steps. I waited patiently, motionless, on the lawn, and presently a shadow passed across the trees. "Hey! Ho! Hey! Ho!" came from the interior of the plane opposite, and in another minute the singer emerged at the very top of the tree, shouting out his little song of gladness.

No mistake about it this time—a blackbird imitating the habit as well as the notes of the song thrush, and proud of his accomplishment.

August has come, and the blackbird's song is ended. But I fancy that whenever in future my thoughts turn to the garden of No. 11 I shall hear again that "Hey! Ho! Hey! Ho! Hey! Ho!"

EPILOGUE

Such has been the career of the three Chamberlains. Nothing has ever come to any of them save by hard work, and after many bitter disappointments. Time and time again the cup has been dashed from their lips at the last moment by envious Fortune, and it is not a little significant that the one of the three to become Prime Minister was he who so long appeared of them all the most unlikely to attain that office. Upon many men a series of reverses would have had an embittering effect, but upon Joseph Chamberlain and his sons the blows of fate only fell in order to strengthen their characters and to broaden their outlook. With others the height which they reached would have induced pride and vain glory, but they have not been so affected, and the simplicity of the family has remained not the least of its charms, as well as one of the most potent causes of its hold over the British public.

What is it that has run through their careers for over sixty years and justifies one in speaking of a Chamberlain Tradition?

In the first place there has been the desire to see a prosperous, united, and contented nation in which every man and woman should start level irrespective of wealth or birth. From his earliest days Mr. Joseph Chamberlain used the machinery, first of the Liberal, and then of the Conservative, Party to this end, very often against the wishes of his leaders and colleagues. His elder son clearly recognized the implication of social reform inherent in the campaign for Protection,

and he never looked upon a tariff as a purely financial measure. Mr. Neville Chamberlain, from the beginning of his public career, devoted himself to the housing and health of the people, and his interest in no way diminished when the mantle of Mr. Baldwin fell on his shoulders. They have none of them forgotten the Radicalism, so closely akin to the older Toryism, of their origin, and they have never hesitated to throw down the gauntlet to those vested interests which stood in their way. *Mens sana in corpore sano* might well have been taken as their watchword.

Then, for upwards of half a century, the Chamberlains have been, alike in success and in adversity, the champions of a United Empire. They have realized that if Great Britain is to pull her weight in the modern world it can only be as part of a great British Empire. It is true that circumstances have dictated varying methods of approach, but sight has never been lost of the aim that, without any weakening of the local patriotism of its component parts, the British Empire at home and overseas should think and act as a united whole.

In international affairs, too, the Chamberlain ideal has been consistent, and, it may be added, fully in accordance with the national tradition. A hundred and fourteen years have elapsed since George Canning wrote, for the benefit of his young cousin, Stratford, that "to preserve the peace of the world is the leading object of the policy of England. For the purpose it is necessary in the first place to prevent to the utmost of our power the breaking out of new quarrels; in the second place, to compose, where it can be done by friendly mediation, existing differences; and thirdly, where that is hopeless, to narrow as much as possible

their range; and fourthly, to maintain for ourselves an imperturbable neutrality in all cases where nothing seems to affect injuriously our interests or our honour." These words, which enshrine the time-honoured maxims of British diplomacy, bear a striking resemblance to those used by Mr. Neville Chamberlain in Scotland in the autumn of 1937, and quoted on an earlier page. Both men, the Ulsterman and the Midlander, gave expression to their belief that their country's foreign policy must be based on a frank recognition of facts and British interests, and on this ground they meet despite the intervening century.

Above all the Chamberlains have been distinguished by leadership, courage, initiative, and realism. Their story, narrated above, contains innumerable examples of the display of these qualities, so necessary in these troublous times, and it is this fact, combined with their high principles and solid achievements, that has created, to the great advantage of British public life, The Chamberlain Tradition.

APPENDIX

(The following sketch has been written by the Prime Minister for the German version of Sir Austen Chamberlain's books, *Down the Years* and *Politics from Inside*, edited, in a single volume, by Dr. F. W. Pick. The German book is entitled *Sir Austen Chamberlain: Englische Politik Erinnerungen aus 50 Jahren*, published by the Essener Verlagsanstalt.)

Sir Austen Chamberlain had intended to write an introduction to the German edition of his *Down the Years* and *Politics from Inside*, but before he could carry out his purpose death came upon him very suddenly and unexpectedly. And so it has fallen to me, his surviving brother, to carry out what I know would have been his wishes, and to supply the following short note to serve by way of preface.

The book consists mainly of personal reminiscences and of extracts from private letters written during the years 1904-1914 by my brother to my father's wife. The letters were not designed for publication, but were intended to amuse and interest my father, who, though struck down by an illness which forbade any further participation in public life, still retained his old clarity and activity of mind.

Dealing, as they mostly do, with internal politics, I imagine that the chief interest of these memoirs for foreign readers will be in the picture they give of the life of an English statesman during the period concerned, and in the glimpses they occasionally afford of other men and women of distinction.

Perhaps the best service I can render to German readers is to tell them in a few words something of the personal characteristics of the author. If I can thereby enlist their interest in a very lovable and chivalrous gentleman, I shall have done a

service to his memory, and perhaps made some small contribution to the goodwill which already exists between two great nations.

Austen Chamberlain was the eldest son of Joseph Chamberlain and my half-brother, his mother and mine having been first cousins. We had four sisters, and were an extraordinarily united family. When my father married for the third time the lady to whom so many of the letters here published were addressed, she at once became one of us, a rare tribute to her qualities as well as to the spirit which my father's influence had established in his family.

The family life, in fact, centred round my father, for whom all of us, and Austen Chamberlain in particular, had the profoundest and most devoted admiration and affection.

Under his influence Austen began to manifest at an early age that intense honesty of purpose, combined with complete moral fearlessness, which distinguished him all through his life. But as he grew older he developed a sort of high old-fashioned courtesy and consideration for others which, combined with his long experience of affairs, gave him a unique position in the British House of Commons.

By various acts of self-sacrifice, as when he withdrew his claims to the leadership of the Conservative Party in favour of Mr. Bonar Law after Mr. Balfour's resignation, rather than be the cause of division, or when he resigned his office of Secretary of State for India in view of his merely technical responsibility for operations in Mesopotamia which had been the subject of criticism, he had demonstrated his single-minded devotion to the public service and his readiness to put aside personal ambitions if he thought they might conceivably conflict with the interest of his country.

And, again, while still in the prime of his mental vigour, he had declined office under Mr. Baldwin "in order to make room for younger men". And so, although only a private Member, in his last years his influence in the House of Commons was such as no other Member possessed, and

indeed was greater than when he himself had held high office.

From his youth he was destined by my father for a political career, and his training, and especially his early sojourns in France and Germany, were devised to fit him for public affairs. As a young man, with his name, his good looks, his charming manners, and his gift for friendship, he made a deep impression on all who came in contact with him, and his cool judgment and wide historical reading marked him out among the most promising of the juniors of his day. This is not the place to describe his rapid advance to office, nor the growing respect which his character won for him among his contemporaries. Though inevitably overshadowed by the tremendous personality of his father in his earlier years, he gradually won his way to a general recognition of his personal qualities and of his value as a wise statesman and a loyal colleague.

Here, however, I would rather dwell upon his characteristics as a man than as a statesman. He had a singularly affectionate nature and, as he often declared, no man was ever happier in his marriage and in his relations with his children. He had little of the English taste for games or sports, and his eyesight, which was very defective from childhood, would have prevented his achieving much success in anything requiring the accurate co-ordination of hand and eye. But he was devoted to flowers. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than to stroll through woods and fields in spring picking primroses and cowslips, and when he was able to cultivate a rock garden in Sussex, he spent many hours attending to his precious Alpines on which he became quite an authority.

He was always what Dr. Johnson used to describe as a "clubable" man, that is to say, that he was naturally sociable and delighted in company. He was an extremely interesting and agreeable talker, for he had stored up in a naturally retentive memory a host of reminiscences, and he was moreover an excellent *raconteur*. There are in London a number of

dining clubs which own no building and no property, but the members of which meet at regular intervals to dine and talk together. Austen Chamberlain belonged to several of these clubs, which included in their membership soldiers and sailors, judges and men of science, authors and literary critics, ecclesiastics and politicians of all parties, and to the end of his life he was a fairly regular attendant at club dinners, where he was welcomed as one of their best and most interesting talkers.

Although he was accustomed to speak his mind with great and sometimes with almost brutal frankness, his sincerity and honesty were so transparent that no one could take offence. He had an even temper which was always under control, and a natural generosity which led him to acknowledge a mistake if he had made one without reserve, and with a smile which disarmed the most heated controversialist. It was significant that his oldest friendships lasted until death put an end to them, and I doubt if he had a single enemy when his own life closed so suddenly.

All through his career, but more especially after he first became Foreign Secretary, he was much more cosmopolitan than most Englishmen. He delighted in travel and in sight-seeing, especially if he had the opportunity of studying pictures and works of art, in which he took great pleasure. He spoke French easily and well, and though his German became rather rusty, he could understand most of a conversation in that language. He had a large acquaintance among people of many nations, and he liked to invite them to his house in London, and to exchange views with them upon international politics.

Like so many of his race, Austen Chamberlain was inclined to a certain reserve in the presence of strangers, and this gave rise to an idea very prevalent at the time that he was somewhat cold and austere by temperament. But a very slight acquaintance generally served to dissipate any such impression. In fact, his nature was expansive and sympathetic,

and after his death I received a great many letters from men much younger than himself, recalling acts of kindness or consideration which had endeared him to them.

Such then was Austen Chamberlain in his private life; the soul of honour, rigid in his principles, but most rigid where he himself was concerned, unswerving in friendship, equally devoted as son, husband, or father, and withal a delightful companion.

He has left behind him in his own country a great example of selfless devotion to public service, and I confidently believe that he will make new friends among the readers of these unstudied sketches.

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